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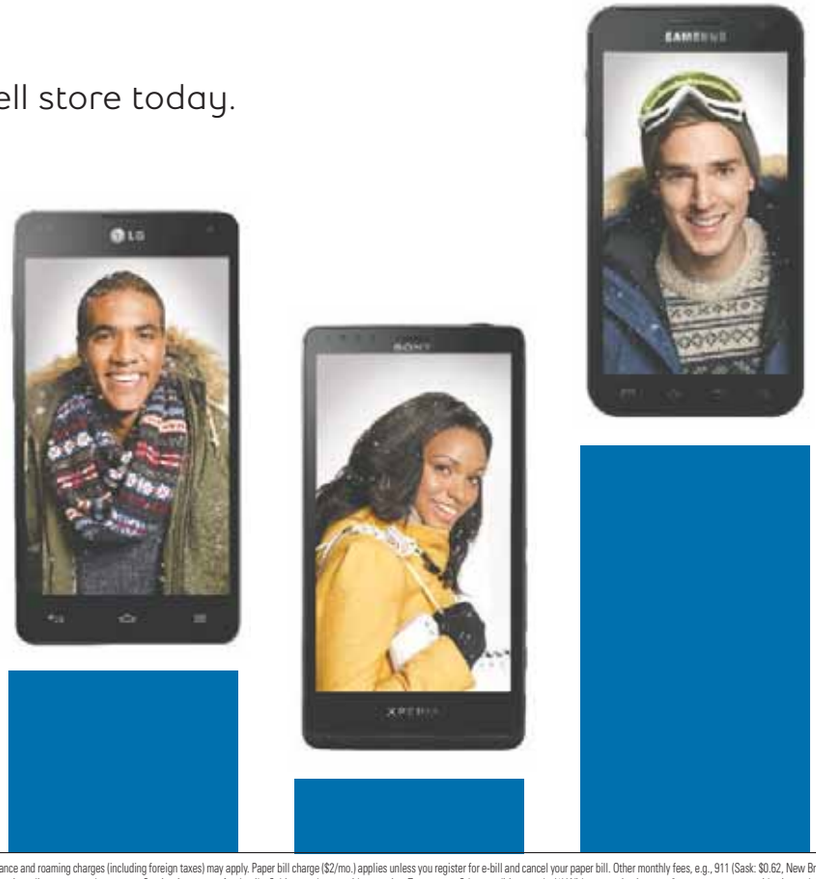

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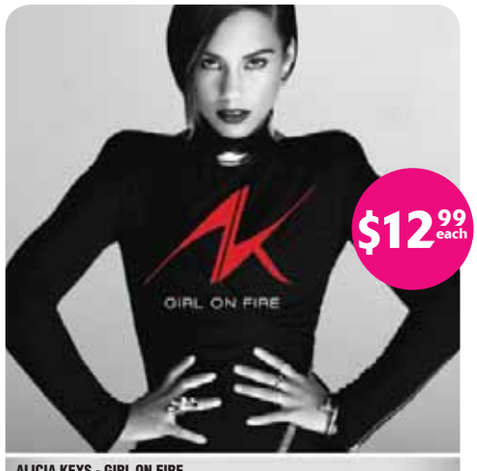

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‘The public is tired of this’

Negotiations. Mayor says final deadline on new arena deal closer than most think

RYAN TUMILTY
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Mayor Stephen Mandel says the time to get a downtown arena deal done is much shorter than people think, because the public is tired of the on-again, off-again nature of the negotiations.

In a year-end interview with Metro, Mandel said the deadline was approaching fast.

“I think it is sooner than people think it is. People are tired of it and I don’t blame them. The public is tired of this damned thing,” an obviously frustrated Mandel said.

Mandel said the public wants the talk to end and the action to begin.

“One way or the other people want it off their table now. More and more people come up to me and say we want it done one way or the other and that isn’t good.”

After a break imposed in October, council voted to re-open negotiations with the Katz Group last week. The next scheduled update on the project is scheduled to come to council on Jan. 23.

Mandel said he doesn’t know where those negotiations might lead.

“I am encouraged; I wouldn’t say optimistic.”

Despite his concerns about the negotiations, Mandel said the project is still absolutely critical for the city’s downtown and he wants to see it built.

“If it wasn’t as important as I think it is, I wouldn’t be spending all this time on it to try to bring it to fruition. I think a new arena downtown will be a catalyst.”

Off again, on again

“If it wasn’t as important as I think it is, I wouldn’t be spending all this time on it to try to bring it to fruition. I think a new arena downtown will be a catalyst.”

Mayor Stephen Mandel

In a year-end interview, Mayor Stephen Mandel said he expected the arena would be two-thirds built at this point and he is frustrated with the pace of negotiations on the project. RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

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Uttering threats. Edmonton teens criminally charged

Just days after a gunman killed 20 children and six adults at a school in Newtown, Conn., two Edmonton teens have been criminally charged after threatening to hurt "a number of people."

On Friday night, hours after the Newtown tragedy, a threatening post was made on an Internet chat room allegedly written by a 16-year-old Edmonton boy.

The FBI contacted the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) about the threat, which was made on an .org open forum.

The threat was also reported to the EPS through an online complaint website.

Within six hours, EPS had the boy's IP address and location and the teen was arrested.

"Certainly we're at a heightened state of awareness now in relation to the tragedy in the U.S. and I suspect that the U.S. authorities are obviously in a heightened state of awareness," said Staff Sgt. Regan James at a press conference on Tuesday.

In a second and separate incident on Thursday, a 15-year-old male allegedly sent a threatening text to an individual, which was reported to police.

Both teens were criminally charged on Monday with one count each of uttering threats dangerous to the public.

James would not elaborate on the specifics of the threats or if the threats were made in relation to a school, stating only that "both threats involved hurting a number of people."

ANNALISE KLINGBEIL/METRO

AHS CEO Chris Eagle, left, and board chair Stephen Lockwood addressed an external audit of former CFO Allaudin Merali last week. New documents released Monday appear to show the ousted health executive had more expenses that were not part of the audit. METRO FILE

Undisclosed Merali expenses surface

Capital Health. AHS releases additional $57,000 worth of previously unreported expenses by former CFO

RYAN TUMILTY
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Former Alberta Health CFO Allaudin Merali racked up tens of thousands of dollars in previously undisclosed expenses, new records released Monday reveal.

New documents posted on the AHS website Monday show that the previously reported $346,000 worth of expenses Merali racked up during his time as the chief financial officer of Capital Health was not the whole picture.

The total revealed during an external audit conducted last week was actually nearly $368,000, but the audit also revealed that in their initial response to FOIP requests, the government only released documentation supporting $311,000 in expenses.

The new documents cover that gap accounting for approximately $57,000.

The new expenses include $380 at Edmonton's Copper Pot Restaurant in July 2005, $520 at the Characters Restaurant in Edmonton on Aug. 10, 2005, and $358.43 at Normand's Restaurant in Edmonton the next night.

A $1,800 expense at the Mayfair Golf and Country club released in the last FOIP request is explained in greater detail in the new documents as a golf club membership.

There were also expenses for flowers and groceries, apparently for dinners hosted at Merali's home.

Wildrose Leader Danielle Smith said it shows the need for a more thorough look at expenses.

"We need to see all of the expenses for all of the health regions and then if we find others where we have a similar problem we need to call in the auditors again," she said.

An AHS spokesperson said they have better standards in place today and are looking past the expense issue.

But Smith said the money adds up when it could have been spent on patients.

"These are not trivial dollars when they are spent on something you can get value for."

WITH FILES FROM JEREMY NOLAIS, KATIE TURNER AND ROBSON FLETCHER

50-50

The audit released last week found about half of Merali's expense were within government policy, while the rest were either outside of policy, or for a small percentage were clearly outside it.

- In a statement released last week Merali said he stood by his expenses and believed that focus has taken away from everything he accomplished.

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Redford, Smith spar over focus on ethical scandals in 2012

Year-end interviews. Premier, opposition leader butt heads over the focus on government scandals this year

RYAN TUMILTY
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Premier Alison Redford would like the opposition to add more substance to the debate, but Wildrose leader Danielle Smith argues they are and if Redford wants less focus on government scandal, she should stop having them.

In a year-end interview, Redford charged that the Wildrose are only criticizing her government for past scandals without offering any substance of their own.

"At the beginning of this session the opposition said it is not enough to criticize, we have to put forward constructive approaches to policy," Redford said. "They should read their own press releases, they haven't done that."

Smith said the vast majority of the Wildrose's questions have been about policy, but also said that if Redford wants to hear less about ethical scandals it's within her own power.

"She is just particularly thin-skinned when it comes to the ethical issues of her government and if she wants us to stop having questions about ethical scandals she should stop having ethical scandals," said Smith.

Redford said she isn't surprised the opposition have taken the tack they have and she doesn't expect change.

"I expect more from the opposition and I don't mean that facetiously, I think they are going to continue along this path."

Smith said her party is focused on improving government legislation and proposing new ideas but they won't let go of the ethical lapses.

"We don't take no for an answer, we don't take their brush-offs and their snarky comments as an answer."

Wildrose Leader Danielle Smith said her party brought more than 50 amendments to the table during the last legislative session and intends to be a productive part of the debate on government bills. RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

Contract work on new LRT could start next year

City council will be asked to help fund the work of preparing a 30-year contract for the southwest LRT early next year. CONTRIBUTED

Edmonton city councillors can expect a request early in February for $30 million to take the first steps toward building a new LRT line in the city.

The $30-million request will help the city prepare contract documents for the proposed public private partnership (P3) to build the southwest LRT line from downtown to Mill Woods, as well as move utilities that would be in the way of the project.

Details of the request were presented to the LRT governance board, a new advisory committee stacked with business people and other experts, to handle the details of the new project.

Transportation manager Bob Boutilier said the request will help the city hire the experts it needs to create a P3 contract for the project that will pass any litmus test.

"A P3 is not a typical city process that we would use and the size of this project being $1.8 billion, it's big business," he said.

"You are writing something up today that has to be defendable 20 or 25 years from now."

Al Maurer, former city manager and the chair of the advisory board, said he believes the board overseeing the project will have the background to help manage the day-to-day decisions and make sure the project is delivered on time.

He said he believes the P3 process should be good for the city on this line.

"I think it's an opportunity, because it is a large enough project that there should be lots of interest," he said.

RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

New LRT

The new line is projected to cost $1.8 billion, and if the city receives the funding it has asked for a 2018 opening.

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AMVIC Licensees

Attack. Edmonton police still searching for violent suspect after second stabbing

Edmonton Police Service, who issued a warning about a violent woman last week, said they believe she may be connected to another attack.

After an attack last week, another man was attacked near 100 Street and 106 Avenue around 3:45 a.m. Tuesday after a suspect forced her way into his home. He suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

Sharon Houle, 36, is wanted for uttering threats to cause death or bodily harm, housebreaking and committing assault, and two counts of housebreaking and committing aggravated assault. METRO

Slave Lake. RCMP issue warning after two die due to holiday drinking

Slave Lake RCMP are warning revellers to be responsible this holiday season after the community had two deaths related to alcohol this weekend.

On Friday, an intoxicated man died from head injuries after falling down a flight of stairs.

Early Saturday morning, an intoxicated 29-year-old man was dropped off at home around 2 a.m. He was found dead in his backyard by a friend about 18 hours later, RCMP believing he died from exposure on the –21 C night.

"This death of this young man is a tragedy for his family and this community. The frustrating thing is that these deaths could have been prevented," said Staff Sgt. Roberta McKale, detachment commander of Slave Lake RCMP in a statement Tuesday.

The identities of both men are being withheld.

METRO

Door-to-door

Holiday scams target well-meaning residents

Residents of Edmonton and Spruce Grove have been victims of a door-to-door scam that preys on wallets and hearts during the holidays.

Spruce Grove RCMP said a pair or individual has been going door-to-door in the Capital Region selling Tim Hortons gift cards — which then turn out to be empty — for the Canadian Cancer Society. METRO

Charity

Organic milk donated to local food bank

The Edmonton Food Bank has received a "moooving" donation in the form of nearly 800 litres of organic milk.

The 2% milk was processed this week at Rock Ride Dairy.

It's the first time the food bank will be able to offer fresh organic milk to agencies to serve with their holiday meals. METRO

Downtown Edmonton Community League member Ian O'Donnell, Edmonton-Centre MP Laurie Hawn and DECL president Chris Buyze pose for a photo at the announcement of DECL's new downtown space Tuesday. LAURIE CALLSEN/METRO

Community league to open new space

Government funding. $16K from feds allows for renovations

LAURIE CALLSEN
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Right now, the new headquarters for the Downtown Edmonton Community League doesn't look like much.

But soon, it will be the first community league gathering space for a growing number of people living in the downtown core.

Standing in an unheated building that hasn't been inhabited since the 1990s, league officials and Edmonton-Centre Member of Parliament Laurie Hawn announced that the building on 103 Street and 100 Avenue would be turned into the community league's first-ever downtown space.

"As the downtown population grows, so do the needs of our community. This facility is going to provide a first step … for programming and other opportunities we haven't been able to provide," said Chris Buyze, president of the DECL.

The Government of Canada gave $16,264 through the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund, which will see upgrades to the mechanical and electrical systems in the building as well as renovations to a common area, secure office space, kitchenette and washrooms.

"Projects like this, smaller community projects, make the quality of life better. It's critical that we start grassroots, at the local level," said Hawn during the announcement.

The new space will be able to offer more services than the community league's current office, like day camps, pop-up stores, yoga classes and community events.

Buyze said the announcement has been pretty hush-hush so far, but hints of the new space have been popping up on the group's Facebook page.

Quote

"The residents are quite excited for what this could mean for downtown. We don't have a hall like most community leagues, so this is the next best thing."

DECL president Chris Buyze, on the league's new space.

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LAS Vegas

Holiday traditions ring true

On the 10th of Metro's 12 Days of Christmas, we asked some familiar Edmonton faces what their favourite annual traditions were, are and what ones they would like to start.

HEATHER MCINTYRE
heather.mcintyre@metronews.ca

METRO FILE

Alison Redford, premier

"My favourite Christmas tradition is the first batch of shortbread. It never turns out; it is always too brown around the edges (because) we cook it too long. But Sarah and I always make it together."

CONTRIBUTED

Jamie Sale, gold medallist

"Growing up ... my parents would let us decorate the tree with the popcorn strings my brother and I would make.

"As an adult, we have started a family/friends sleigh ride.... This year we are hoping to start another tradition of hosting a less-fortunate family for Christmas dinner."

HEATHER MCINTYRE

Ken Block, fire chief

"The magic of Christmas for me is about family and loved ones. Nothing compares to a Christmas morning spent with your spouse, your children ... experiencing their unbridled joy as they discover what Santa has left for them this year! It's one of the really special moments of the year."

CONTRIBUTED

Mack Male, urban blogger

"When I was growing up, a tradition we had was that we'd open one present from mom and dad on Christmas Eve. And it was always the same — pyjamas and a book. Nowadays… I sort of feel like I'm at the age where my partner Sharon and I need to create our own traditions!"

METRO FILE

Stephen Mandel, mayor

"On Christmas morning, we get up and we have French toast and we open presents. And I make the French toast for the kids. Of course we get together with family, and my wife cooks for everybody — really specific foods every year."

CONTRIBUTED

Travis Ewanyk, Oilers draft pick

"Just going to the outdoor rink with my family. I've got a real hockey family. My sister plays hockey, and my father used to play hockey, and my mom knows how to skate and play. It's a really nice time. Every year, at least a couple of us try to get out there."

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Republicans open up to gun debate

Taking the first step. Gun manufacturers see shares continue to drop as politicians on both sides of the aisle shift stances following Friday's shooting

Some Republicans now say they're willing to discuss the politically treacherous issue of gun control, along with mental-health issues and violent video games, while U.S. President Barack Obama said he supports efforts in Congress to reinstate an assault-weapon ban in the wake of last week's Connecticut school shooting.

The massacre, one of the worst mass shootings in U.S history, has rattled the usual national dialogue on guns in America, where public opinion had shifted against tougher gun control in recent years, and the gun lobby is a powerful political force.

Obama has long supported reinstating the assault-weapon ban, which expired in 2004, but was quiet on the issue during his first term. He has said he believes the Constitution's Second Amendment guarantees an individual the right to bear arms.

The president was not expected to take any formal action on guns before the end of the year, given the all-consuming efforts to resolve tax and deficit-reduction talks and nominate new cabinet secretaries.

The most powerful supporter of gun owners, the National Rifle Association, broke its silence Tuesday. After a self-imposed media blackout that left many wondering how it would respond to the killings, it said in a statement that its members were "shocked, saddened and heartbroken by the news of the horrific and senseless murders."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Susan Sheperd wipes a tear as she stands with friends and co-workers at the funeral Tuesday for James Mattioli, 6, who died in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings. Funerals were held for Mattioli and Jessica Rekos, 6, who were among the 26 people killed when Adam Lanza walked into the elementary school in Newtown, Conn., on Dec. 14 and opened fire. CRAIG RUTTLE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A complicated issue

"Put guns on the table ... put video games on the table, put mental health on the table."

Republican congressman Jack Kingston

Quebec. Slain teacher's relatives call American gun laws 'revolting'

The Newtown school massacre has left grieving Canadian relatives of one murdered teacher denouncing American gun laws.

Several of the Rousseau family in Quebec's Eastern Townships will be going down to Connecticut for the funeral of Lauren Rousseau, a substitute teacher whose father was born in Quebec.

"It's revolting how easy it is to obtain firearms — that's what's so infuriating," said the victim's uncle, Francois Rousseau. He and several relatives will be heading down for the funeral of his brother's daughter.

Lauren Rousseau, 30, was born in the U.S. Her Canadian-born father, Gilles, told Radio-Canada that he wanted to see his daughter's body, but was informed by authorities that it would not be possible.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bushmaster rifles

Firearms maker put up for sale

The largest firearms maker in the United States said Tuesday it is being put up for sale by its owner, which called last week's school shooting a "watershed event" in the national debate over gun control. Freedom Group International makes Bushmaster rifles, the weapon thought to have been used in Friday's killings.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Claims self-defence

Student, 11, brings gun to school

Authorities say an 11-year-old boy caught with a gun at school in Utah told administrators he brought the weapon to defend himself in case of an attack similar to the mass shooting last week at a Connecticut elementary school. School officials say the boy has been arrested. No one was injured.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sex slur sparks school riot

Anonymous posting on Instagram. Mounted police move in as anger explodes after teenage girls are called 'sluts' and 'whores'

ARON ANDERSSON
Metro World News in Sweden

The scene outside a school in Sweden where a riot erupted after an Instagram account called teenage girls "sluts" and "whores." HENRIK BRUNNSGARD/METRO SWEDEN

An anonymous Instagram account that posted images of teenage girls and called them "sluts" and "whores" has sparked riots outside a Swedish high school.

The account showed more than 200 images of teens reportedly as young as 13.

It contained details of alleged sexual activity.

Hundreds of teens gathered outside Plusgymnasiet high school in Gothenburg where the alleged owner of the account is believed to attend.

Police, some on horseback, went to the school as students threw objects and jumped on cars, witnesses said.

YouTube footage shows a large group scuffling.

At the high school, one girl was hit in the face, another was attacked and kicked by four girls, a witness told Metro.

"The teachers cried out and there was a panic on the whole school. It was so sick," said 17-year old student Janina Niemi, who was in the canteen when the fracas began.

"I saw one girl being kicked in the head. She was on the ground, there were four against one."

Some 27 people were arrested. A 17-year-old girl has been taken into custody. The girl is suspected of having started the Instagram account.

The aftermath: The Instagram account was shut down but then migrated to Facebook.

Quoted

"It is completely unacceptable to say things like this about people."

Kirsi Niemi,
mother of student Janina Niemi.

Landmark study

3,000 Saudis say: Let our women drive

Is a ban on Saudi women driving destined to disappear? That could be the outcome if a landmark study helps sway the Muslim kingdom's leaders.

A Saudi online newspaper says more than 3,000 nationals of the kingdom have endorsed a study that recommends lifting a ban on women driving.

The list of backers includes prominent writers and academics.

Sabaq quoted on Tuesday Abdullah al-Alami, a researcher who contributed to the study, as saying it was sent to King Abdullah's main advisory body, the Shura Council, asking it to set a date to discuss it.

Key religious leaders in the ultraconservative kingdom want to keep the practice of not letting women drive.

But some religious scholars have backed a movement to encourage the king to change the laws. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Student dies after hazing ritual's booze-filled night

A vodka ceremony. Nearly two dozen frat members face charges — and they could also be expelled from university

Nearly two dozen fraternity members at a U.S. university face hazing-related charges after a night of drinking ended in tragedy.

David Bogenberger, 19, was found unresponsive at a fraternity house at Northern Illinois University on Nov. 2.

His blood alcohol level was about five times the legal limit for driving, the DeKalb County Coroner's Office said.

The coroner ruled Bogenberger's cause of death was cardiac arrhythmia, with alcohol intoxication as a contributing cause.

Quoted

"We have no desire for revenge. Rather, we hope that some significant change will come from David's death."

Statement by the family of David Bogenberger

The DeKalb Police Department said its investigation found the fraternity hosted an unsanctioned event that wasn't registered with the university or the fraternity's national chapter.

"The event that night involved the pledges (freshmen) rotating between several rooms in the fraternity house, being asked a series of questions, and then being provided cups of vodka and other liquor to drink," police said.

"This resulted in the pledges drinking a large quantity of alcohol in about a two-hour time period."

Police said several other pledges reported getting sick and passing out due to excessive alcohol consumption.

Bogenberger's family said they appreciate law-enforcement professionals who investigated the teenager's death and "seek accountability for a horrible event."

"Alcohol poisoning claims far too many young, healthy lives," the family's statement said.

Five members of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity are charged with felony hazing, while 17 members face misdemeanour hazing charges.

In addition to the charges, the university said 31 students are accused of violating the school's code of conduct. Those students could face penalties ranging from reprimand to expulsion.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Daring cons flee jail by sliding down 20 storeys

Crime-scene tape surrounds a highrise federal jail in Chicago on Tuesday after a daring escape by two convicted bank robbers. Their path to freedom? The makeshift rope shown on the right. They busted away concrete to enlarge a window, climbed out onto the rope and clambered down ... about 20 storeys!

PHOTOS BY SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

Miss USA contestant

Beauty queen has to pay $5M

A beauty queen who claimed this year's Miss USA contest was fixed has been ordered to pay the pageant $5 million for defamation.

An arbitrator said the comments from Miss Pennsylvania USA Sheena Monnin were false, harmful and malicious.

Monnin had alleged the five finalists had been selected in advance of the pageant's live telecast.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gun tragedy

Husband charged in wife's suicide

An upstate New York man has been charged with manslaughter in his wife's suicide by gunshot.

Authorities allege he showed despondent Kathie Skellie, 59, how to fire a shotgun before leaving her alone in their Glen Falls home to go hunting.

Willard Skellie, 69, was being held in jail Tuesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Suspects in maple-syrup heist nabbed

Sticky fingers. Three people arrested in connection with theft of 2.7 million kilos of sweet, sweet inventory

There have been arrests in the case of a massive maple-syrup heist, police announced Tuesday as they celebrated a break in their months-long multi-jurisdictional search for the stolen sticky stuff.

Three people have been detained in connection with the theft of a large quantity of the national condiment from a warehouse in Quebec.

About 2.7 million kilos of maple syrup was reported missing after a routine inventory check last summer. Or, if your preferred unit of measurement is pancakes, the stolen amount would have provided a one-tablespoon topping for a whopping 183 million flapjacks.

Quebec police say they have recovered two-thirds of the syrup stolen from a warehouse last summer. ISTOCK

Police say they have now recovered most of the missing syrup. They have also seized vehicles suspected of being used in the trafficking operation and equipment like scales and electronic lifts.

Those arrested were expected to face charges in a Trois-Rivières courtroom of theft, conspiracy, fraud and trafficking in stolen goods Tuesday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Death row

Governor spares obese inmate

The decision by Ohio's governor to spare a morbidly obese death-row inmate on legal grounds unrelated to the prisoner's weight means executions will likely carry on in the state next year.

Gov. John Kasich on Monday commuted the death sentence of Ronald Post to life without the possibility of parole.

Had the governor considered the argument used in Federal Court — that executing Post would amount to cruel and unusual punishment — other death-row inmates may have been able to use the same argument.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Corrupting morals'

Gore artist testifies

A Quebec special-effects artist charged with corrupting morals has defended himself in court, testifying that his gory works constitute art.

Remy Couture testified on his own behalf at a jury trial being heard Tuesday in Montreal.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

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No hidden fees

Airfare ads must show total ticket price, feds say

The federal government says advertised airfares for flights originating in Canada must include all relevant fees so the travelling public can easily understand the total cost.

Transport Minister Denis Lebel said advertised prices for the public must include all taxes, fees and other charges so consumers can clearly see the total cost of an airline ticket, with no hidden fees. The "all-in" price doesn't need to include fees for optional services such as in-flight entertainment, meals and baggage, but the price of the options must be displayed. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Policy change

Instagram says photos won't end up in advertising

Instagram, the popular photo-sharing service that Facebook bought this year, says it will revise a planned update to its service agreement after confusion about its intent led to widespread user complaints.

At issue is whether users' photos can be part of advertisements, on and off Instagram. The company said in a blog post Tuesday that it has no plans to put users' photos in advertisements. That said, Instagram maintains that it was created to become a business and would like to experiment with various forms of advertisements to make money. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Air Canada Rouge takes flight July 1

Discount travel. New carrier will focus on leisure travel market, with destinations in Europe, Caribbean

Air Canada's chief commercial officer Ben Smith, right, and Michael Friisdahl, CEO of Air Canada Leisure Group, second right, unveil new leisure airline Air Canada Rouge in downtown Toronto on Tuesday. AARON VINCENT ELKAIM/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Air Canada is jumping into the low-cost leisure travel market with the launch of its new Rouge airline, which will begin flying on Canada Day to destinations in Europe and the Caribbean.

The airline will start with flights from Toronto to Venice and Edinburgh — two destinations that currently aren't served by Air Canada — and will serve Athens from Toronto and Montreal.

Air Canada's existing flights to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Costa Rica will be flown by the discount carrier from Toronto.

The destinations are areas where demand for leisure travel has been growing, said Ben Smith, Air Canada's chief commercial officer. But many are routes that didn't generate adequate profits under Air Canada's existing cost structure.

"The creation of this carrier is to assist us in serving many destinations that our existing model does not work on a competitive basis," Smith said.

The airline says flights to Venice, Edinburgh and Athens start at "special introductory fares" of $949 round-trip, including all taxes, fees, charges and surcharges.

Flights to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica will start at $269, one-way, while Cuba is offered starting at $538 round-trip. All the introductory fares, which are available until Dec. 25, are based on Toronto departures. THE CANADIAN PRESS

BVO. Drink additive is safe, Health Canada says

Major soft-drink makers and Health Canada say the use of brominated vegetable oil in Canadian beverages is safe, despite a growing movement elsewhere to ban its use.

The additive, which is used to cloud and stop separation in some drinks, has been banned in most of Europe for decades and Japan recently discontinued its use. However, BVO continues to be used in popular drinks sold in Canada, including some flavours of Gatorade, Powerade, Fresca, Mountain Dew and Amp Energy Drink.

BVO is classified as a food additive, but there is limited knowledge of its composition, researchers have said. It does contain bromine, which is also in flame retardants and has been found to build up in body lipids. A Health Canada spokesman said there are no health risks associated with BVO when it is used according to regulations, which sets out that 15 parts per million can be used in citrus or spruce-flavoured beverages. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

When shoppers hit 'like,' retailers listen

Social media. Stores decide what products to stock up on and what deals to offer based on online feedback

Facebook isn't just for goofy pictures and silly chatter. Whether shoppers know it or not, their actions online help dictate what's in stores during this holiday season.

After polling customers on the social-media site, Macy's decided to carry denim jeans in bright neon hues rather than pastels. Walmart for the first time decided to let customers vote on which toys they want discounted.

And to better plan orders for the decorative flags she sells, a small-business owner in Mississippi is running a contest that encourages customers to chime in about how they're decorating their homes this winter.

The impact of social media on a company's bottom line is tough to quantify, with no hard data on how millions of Facebook fans and Twitter followers translate into sales for stores.

But during the holiday shopping season, a roughly two-month period when retailers can make up to 40 per cent of their annual revenue, stores are uncovering a valuable use for all the seemingly useless online muttering — market research.

The result is that whenever folks press the "like" button to give their seal of approval to a particular company's page or make a comment on how much they like the leather boots they just bought, they're helping everyone from independently owned small shops to the biggest retailers make decisions about what products to stock up on, what to play up on the sales floor and what promotions to offer online.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this Nov. 22 photo, a shopper uses her smartphone at a Best Buy store in Florida. By using social media, consumers can influence what products retailers carry during the crucial holiday buying season. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Facebook. Real-name policy is verboten, German official says

Facebook will fight a German privacy watchdog's demand to allow users to register with fake names, insisting Tuesday that its current practice fully complies with the law.

The California-based social-networking site has long required users to register with their real names — a policy that the data protection commissioner of Schleswig-Holstein state says is in breach of German law and European rules designed to protect free speech online.

The commissioner, Thilo Weichert, ordered Facebook on Monday to rescind its real-name policy immediately.

"We believe the orders are without merit, a waste of German taxpayers' money and we will fight it vigorously," Facebook said in a statement. The company claims that its real-name policy is intended to protect users.

Weichert said Facebook has two weeks to respond. If it fails to comply with the order, his office can impose a penalty against the company, said Weichert.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By the numbers

$65K

The maximum fine would be only about $65,000 — peanuts for a multinational company, but nevertheless a symbolic blow that could also lead to a tougher stance from other German and European privacy regulators.

Online shopping

Santa's little helper: Canada Post chalks up delivery record

Canada Post delivered a single-day record of one million parcels across Canada last Thursday, underlining moves by the federal Crown corporation to take advantage of a growing trend.

The single-day record represented an 11 per cent increase over the previous year's busiest day, Canada Post said.

And with seven days left before Christmas Day, Canada Post expects to deliver an additional 4.4 million parcels by the evening of Dec. 24.

"Achieving this milestone confirms that we are successfully repositioning Canada Post to serve the emerging needs of Canadians," said Jacques Cote, group president of the physical delivery network at Canada Post. In recent years, Canada Post has made major investments in new equipment.

He noted that an estimated $8 billion worth of physical goods is ordered online in Canada each year for residential delivery, a figure forecasted to grow to more than $15 billion by 2016. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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CUDDLE PARTY MARKS END OF WORLD

JUST SAYIN'
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Looking for something to do the day the world ends?

How about a Cuddle Party? There's one on the Last Day, this coming Friday, somewhere in Calgary. To ward off kuddle krashers, you don't get to know the final location until you pay your 20 bucks and sign up. Then, apparently, you turn up in your pyjamas ready to cuddle. Or not.

WTF? You don't know about Cuddle Parties? Well, let me bring you up to speed. The Cuddle Party is the brainchild of two New York relationship counsellors (you're surprised?), Reid Mihalko and Marcia Baczynski, who started them in their "tiny Manhattan apartment" in 2004. They spread immediately to the Left Coast, and from there to Vancouver and Calgary, the apparent, er, hot bed of Canadian cuddling.

In a nutshell

The idea is to bring a bunch of people together, most of them total strangers, and create a group grope that stays on the disappointing side of sexuality throughout.

Those eastern bastards may have to freeze in the dark, but Calgary has Cuddle Power to keep it warm.

The idea is to bring a bunch of people together, most of them total strangers, and create a group grope that stays on the disappointing side of sexuality throughout.

Organizers are adamant. No sex. According to the Rules (and there are plenty of them), if you get turned on, just wait and it will go away. So they say. Just to make sure: no alcohol or shorts allowed. Pyjamas with drawstrings — this is a lace-free zone.

The first 40 minutes of the event involves a presentation on How to Cuddle, giving leery participants enough time to work up the courage to cuddle some guy you might not care to sit next to on the bus, especially considering the way he's looking at you.

But don't worry! By the end of the evening, you'll have discovered the Joy of Cuddling and will be prepared to cuddle anyone or anything. Or not. One of the features of the Cuddle Party is that it offers participants an opportunity to learn how to say NO in the clinch. Each touch essentially has to be negotiated in advance. If the cuddlee says yes (not yes! yes! yes!) then the cuddler can proceed with some respectful, non-sexual touching.

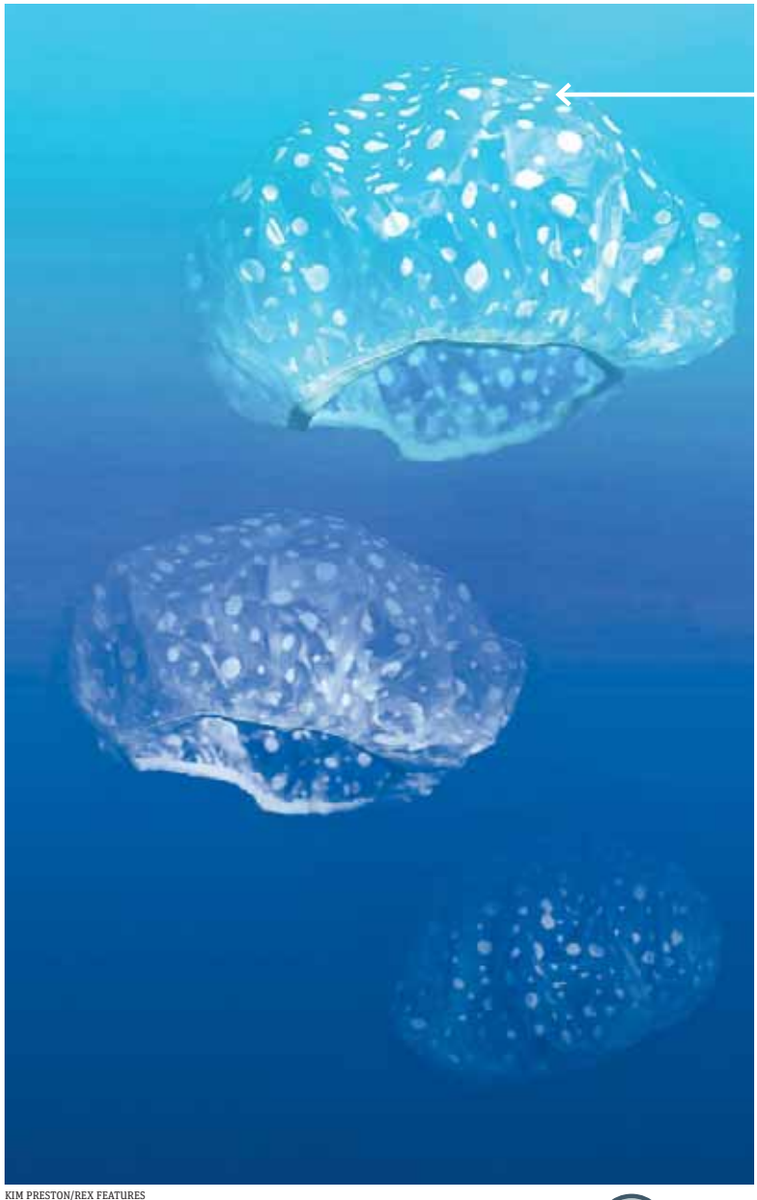
This advanced course in touching strangers leads to a lot of (painfully) sincere, convoluted language from participant testimonials on the website cuddleparty.com about learning to say no in order to say yes, or is it the other way around? And about how cuddling is not always about sex and various other things guys will say when they hope to get lucky.

Look, I can't think of anything I'd rather do less on my last day on Earth than cuddle with the cast of Portlandia, but that's just me. I can Just Say No, can't I?

But you go ahead and get to yes. Just remember, that's all you're getting.

If you haven't heard of Cuddle Parties yet, get well acquainted. CUDDLEPARTY.COM

This looks a bit fishy



KIM PRESTON/REX FEATURES

'Animal' photography

Plastic shot to look like sea creatures

This image of odd-looking sea creatures would have marine biologists baffled, but it in fact shows an everyday object shot to represent sea animals. The project, titled Plastic Pacific, was created by Australian artist Kim Preston, 33, who wanted to draw attention to the devastating effect of plastic buildup in oceans around the globe. METRO

Artist's viewpoint

"I hoped that the prettiness of the images would draw people in more than if I showed the far uglier reality."

Kim Preston, digital designer and illustrator, 33, from Melbourne
Passionate about the preservation of our oceans, Preston added that "this is a photographically based rant against the irresponsible overuse of plastic. I recently obtained a scuba-diving certificate in Indonesia and seeing all of the plastic caught on the reefs inspired this project."

Process of photograph

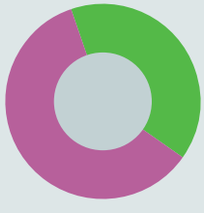
Creativity used to shoot under budget

Shot in her garden shed, Preston used a blue fabric as the backdrop and hung all the objects from a clothes rack while she photographed them. For the shower caps, she would quickly blow into them before snapping a shot with a wireless shutter release. She had planned to shoot the series inside a fish tank, but her lack of budget forced her to become more creative. METRO

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

RIM's BlackBerry 10 is getting rave reviews. Are you buying into the hype?



Twitter

@SophophilicGyle: 'Stop pickin your nose, homeslice.' Apparently manual nose grooming is more important than signals and shoulder checks. #yeg #yegtraffic

@JackLamden: Let me tell you the easiest way to queue jump for healthcare in #YEG. Accidentally stab a 2 inch hole in your hand while cooking (ouch).

@wunderbar: So @FlyEIA will announce a new non stop destination tomorrow. Red Deer, anyone? #yeg

@_Alexis_Marie: Short day at #art studio because my baby has his first full on cold. Not all milestones can be boogie free. @harcourthouse #kids #cold #yeg

@SzopaS: Why is everyone in #yeg always mad #dontworrybehappy

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End of the world viewing

The end of the world may or may not be upon us, but Hollywood has been preparing us for this moment for decades. The higher the stakes, the bigger the drama, and there's no higher stakes than the fate of the entire world. So here's our picks for the best movies about the end of the world.

NED EHRBAR
scene@metronews.ca

1. Children of Men (2006)

Alfonso Cuarón's adaptation of P.D. James' novel about a world unraveling after women stop being able to get pregnant is a masterpiece, a gripping and hyper-realistic look at how society deals with calamity. The real tragedy is how little attention it got upon its release. Watch it now, while you still have time.

2. Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)

Stanley Kubrick made it OK to laugh in the face of possible nuclear annihilation with this pointed satire of escalation and mutually assured destruction, culminating with Slim Pickens' famous ride on a warhead.

3. Melancholia (2011)

Dazzling visuals and an impressive, against-type performance by Kirsten Dunst buoy this divisive film from Lars von Trier about a family trying to get through a wedding while a rogue planet hurtles toward Earth, threatening total annihilation.

4. The Cabin in the Woods (2012)

Spoiler alert: Drew Goddard's hilarious, twist-filled take on horror movies (co-written by Joss Whedon) is more than it seems.

5. Night of the Comet (1984)

Call it the Omega Valley Girls. In this sci-fi horror-comedy gem, two no-nonsense teenage sisters contend with zombies in the fallout of the titular comet reducing Los Angeles to rubble.

6. Last Night (1998)

A quiet, delightful indie precursor to Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, Don McKeller's film gives a distinctly Canadian look at the end of the world. Toronto residents have had months to prepare, so there's little need for panic.

7. The Road (2009)

A gut-punch of a film, John Hillcoat's screen adaptation is just as chilling and stark as the Cormac McCarthy novel on which it is based. The world may not actually end in this one, but from the looks of what's become of things, it might as well have.

8. Seeking a Friend for the End of the World (2012)

A refreshing take on the asteroid headed to Earth plot, this road movie with Steve Carell and Keira Knightley is surprisingly charming — and features a barrage of comic cameos as the main characters head out across the country with three weeks to live.

9. On the Beach (1959)

Long before CGI could render total destruction in realistic detail, we had Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner waiting out the end in Australia after a global nuclear war in this Cold War-era drama, notable for its non-Hollywood ending.

10. Deep Impact (1998)

In a year that brought competing projects about an asteroid on a collision course with the Earth, the scrappy Deep Impact is actually the superior movie to Michael Bay's bloated, Aerosmith-ballad-filled Armageddon if for no other reason than it gave us President Morgan Freeman. Also, points for casting Elijah Wood.

Week of Armageddon

Check out Metro all week for more stories of apocalyptic proportions.

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‘It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life’

Movies. The classic Bill Murray quote stands the test of time as the latest mid-life crisis movie, This is 40, arrives this weekend

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

Robert Smigel, left, gives advice to Paul Rudd in This Is 40, an unfiltered, comedic look inside the life of an American family from writer/director/producer Judd Apatow. HANDOUT

Forty isn’t old, but Leslie Mann and Paul Rudd, the leads in the new Judd Apatow comedy This is 40, are confronting middle age and not always liking what they see.

Mid-life ruts have supplied the basis for many movies.

The best-known age-angst film has to be American Beauty. Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey, who won a best actor Oscar for his work) has a classic case of the mid-life blues. Depressed, he allows himself to be pushed around by his employer and his wife and he’s developed an unhealthy crush on his daughter’s friend. To restart his life, he quits his job, blackmails his boss and deals with his wife’s infidelity.

“I feel like I’ve been in a coma for the past 20 years,” he says. “And I’m just now waking up.”

Things don’t work out well for Lester, but weatherman Phil Connors’s (Bill Murray) mid life crisis has a better outcome.

At the beginning of Groundhog Day he’s a drunk, suicide prone curmudgeon who sums up his outlook like this, “I’ll give you a winter prediction: It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life.”

When he starts living the same day over and over again, however, he begins to see the beauty of life.

Bill Murray is also forced to reflect on his existence in Broken Flowers, when he receives a mysterious letter telling him of a son he didn’t know about.

“Well, the past is gone, I know that,” he says. “The future isn’t here yet, whatever it’s going to be. So, all there is, is this. The present. That’s it.”

Mid-life crises aren’t the domain of men, however.

In The Bridges of Madison County, Meryl Streep plays Francesca, an Iowa housewife who shatters the midlife doldrums by having a brief but meaningful affair with National Geographic photographer Robert Kincaid (played by Clint Eastwood). Of her affair she says, “everything I knew to be true about myself up until then was gone. I was acting like another woman, yet I was more myself than ever before.”

The best-loved mid-life movie might be Shirley Valentine, the bittersweet tale of an English housewife who leaves her humdrum existence behind for a happier life in the Greek islands.

“I used to be The Mother,” she says. “I used to be The Wife. But now I’m Shirley Valentine again.”

Movie Review

A Guilt Trip down the middle lane

The Guilt Trip

Director. Anne Fletcher

Stars. Seth Rogen, Barbra Streisand

What made The Guilt Trip an interesting premise also ultimately works against it. Sure, crafting a road-trip comedy with Barbra Streisand as mother to Seth Rogen’s coddled adult son may attract fans from disparate camps, but by skirting down the middle, the comedy ends up compromised for both sides. Ultimately, the Babs side wins as Streisand’s overbearing Jewish matriarch makes Rogen look like he’s just holding back. STEVE GOW/METRO

Carried away and following Kaufman

Paul Banks. Interpol frontman's second solo album has him channeling his inner comedian

PAT HEALY
Metro World News

Paul Banks wants to let you in on something: That tennis photo is a joke.

"There's probably a lot of people that see this photo of me looking angry, playing tennis, and they think that I'm serious, or that it's actually me doing a shot where I think I look cool," says the Interpol singer, who is touring to promote his second album away from his band.

"But I'm kind of a disciple of Andy Kaufman; I kind of like jokes that people don't get.

"That one-in-10 people gets the fact that something is wrapped up in humour, it's that much funnier to that person and that's the person that's on my wavelength," he says.

Banks's humour has historically gotten lost in the mix of a band whose music has thrived off a sense of cryptic disconnect and whose image has most often been projected with a cinematic sophistication.

But he says when he is working with Interpol guitarist Daniel Kessler, there's a different vibe than with his solo material.

"If Daniel presents this incredibly elegant piece of music that evokes certain sentiments and ideas in me, the thing I'm going to gravitate toward is not thinking some sportscaster is hot," he says.

"Whereas when I'm working on my own things I can just be carried by any idea that comes to mind."

Indeed.

On his first non-Interpol album, 2009's Julian Plenti is ... Skyscraper, Banks did record a song called Girl on the Sporting News.

This latest album, simply entitled Banks, features a few tracks that have similarly silly premises, but are presented in ways that casual listeners might take seriously.

One track in particular sounds like an upbeat pop song, were it not for him singing, almost mechanically, "I'll sue you."

"You might see that as somehow literal," he says. "But that's a song where I'm exploring the mindset of someone that I'm totally not. ... That's very much like that thing that actors say about how playing the villain is fun."

Real or fake — this Paul Banks photo had people splitting their gut with laughter. HELENA CHRISTENSEN

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Channing Tatum's wife Jenna Dewan-Tatum has a bun in the oven.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

'Sexiest Man Alive' reproducing

Capping off an amazing year that's included several hit movies and a Sexiest Man Alive title, Channing Tatum is now gearing up for fatherhood. Tatum's wife, Jenna Dewan-Tatum, is expecting the couple's first child sometime next year, their rep confirmed to People magazine. And it may not be the last.

"I'm ready. I think she's ready," Tatum recently told the magazine. "The first number that pops into my head is three, but I just want one to be healthy and then we'll see where we go after that."

Mila Kunis was one of hacker Christopher Chaney's victims.

Celeb hacker gets 10 years

Christopher Chaney, the man responsible for hacking the email accounts of more than 50 celebrities and posting their intimate photos online, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison, according to E! News.

Chaney was also ordered to pay restitution fees of $66,179 by the judge, who admonished Chaney for his "callous disregard to his victims" during the hearing. His famous victims included Scarlett Johansson, Miley Cyrus, Jessica Alba and Mila Kunis.

The Word

Bend it like Burberry? The 10-year-old kid of Posh and England's soccer superstar will be one of the new faces of the British luxury label come 2013.

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Beckham?

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Maybe he's just not that good with a soccer ball?

It was announced this week that at only 10 years old, David and Victoria Beckham's son Romeo Beckham is the "baby face" of Burberry's spring/summer '13 campaign, joining a long list of models and stars who have fronted ads for the house, including Cara Delevingne, Edie Campbell and Eddie Redmayne. "We had such fun shooting the campaign and I think that comes through in the images, which really reflect the upbeat spirit of the collection," Burberry's creative director Christopher Bailey says.

Perhaps Burberry really wanted his dad, David Beckham, but then decided they wanted to go with someone who has more of a mature, male voice?

In other news: A 2012 coming-out recap

Who: Anderson Cooper, journalist.
How: In an email to blogger Andrew Sullivan.
What was said: "The fact is, I'm gay," Cooper wrote. "Always have been, always will be, and I couldn't be any more happy, comfortable with myself and proud." Cooper, who was the subject of rumours for years, addressed his silence in the email. "I have given some the mistaken impression that I am trying to hide something — something that makes me uncomfortable, ashamed or even afraid. This is distressing because it is simply not true."

Who: Wade Davis, a cornerback who spent four pre-seasons with three NFL teams.
How: In an interview with Outsports.com.
What was said: "You just want to be one of the guys, and you don't want to lose that sense of family," Davis said about not coming out sooner. "Your biggest fear is that you'll lose that camaraderie and family." There has yet to be an openly gay player in any of the four major American professional leagues.

Who: Lee "Uncle Poodle" Thompson, redneck.
How: Just by appearing on Honey Boo Boo.
What was said: Thompson's homosexuality isn't a huge to-do on the show; he's out and proud. As Alana says in the season finale, "ain't nothin' wrong with bein' a little gay."

E.T. star is adult enough to admit she still makes mistakes.

Drew still a kid at heart

Drew Barrymore has done a lot of growing up, but that doesn't mean she feels like an adult.

"The mistakes, the potholes, the journeys, the bad patterns — all of it is so much clearer to me now, but I still don't totally feel like a grown-up," the 37-year-old new mom tells Allure magazine. "Maybe I never will."

Zooey Deschanel and Death Cab for Cutie's Benjamin Gibbard are never, ever, getting back together.

Cutie divorce finalized

Zooey Deschanel's marriage to Death Cab for Cutie frontman Benjamin Gibbard is officially over, with the former couple formalizing their divorce in a Los Angeles court last week, just over a month after separating, according to E! News. And the New Girl star appears to already be moving on, having been spotted recently walking hand-in-hand with new screenwriter boyfriend Jamie Linden.

Twitter

@SteveMartinToGo
Still not feeling funny, nor is funny feeling appropriate.

@Sethrogen
After watching Homeland and Zero Dark Thirty, I'm really thinking the CIA should release a line of sexy lady's pantsuits.

@BryanSinger
I can't seem to tweet without misspelling something. :(

@AlbertBrooks
Gerard Depardieu gives up French citizenship and moves to Belgium. Taxes or waffles?

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LIFE 3

This holiday season, think South Pole instead of North

Icy wonderland. While Santa's homeland might be on our minds right now, Antarctica's unspoiled landscape beckons travellers

DOUG WALLACE
life@metronews.ca

Who owns Antarctica? The penguins, of course — several million of them (cute little devils, too). At 1.4 times the size of Canada, the seventh continent to tick off your bucket list is rich with incredible wildlife, pristine vistas and amazing history. With the season stretching from the end of November to the beginning of March, and January temps hovering at zero around the northern part of the Antarctic Peninsula, this trip south could be your chance to be a real snowbird this winter.

The starting gate

The expedition begins with an overnight in Ushuaia, a small city of 65,000 at the bottom of Argentina that bills itself as the "city at the end of the world." Just a few kilometres from Tierra del Fuego National Park, it was originally founded as a prison colony, and the old prison has been converted into a museum complex, which includes a full wing on Antarctica itself.

The ship

Most of the cruise ships that serve Antarctica are a smaller variety; great for squeezing through ice-filled canals. Toronto-based Quark Expeditions has been ferrying people across the notorious Drake Passage for 20 years, with a comfortably high guest-to-crew ratio and an excellent track record. On-board experts share their knowledge of ornithology, marine biology, zoology and geology with insightful talks during downtimes on the voyage down and back, as well as throughout the trip.

Photography courses help guests get that perfect shot, and a wellness program includes yoga classes and massage therapy — both great for relieving backs left sore from a day of hiking and Zodiac boat rides around all the icebergs. There are cocktail parties and regular recaps of the day's events, and the food is top notch — just like on luxury cruises.

The crowd

A truly international crowd makes this trek — from the fleece-clad adventurers to the retirees bored with the Caribbean to the young marrieds getting in some travel miles before they start a family.

"Antarctica captures people's imagination regardless of their age, and people come with different goals," says Quark expedition leader David Wood. "Some are captivated by penguins, others (are) looking for whales. It's fascinating talking to people about what it was that motivated them. One fellow had a chance to come to an Antarctica base to work when he was younger, but his wife was having a baby and wouldn't let him go. So 40 years later, she gave him the trip as a gift."

Visiting scientists gathering data could well accompany you on your excursions, and are eager to talk about their work. Whether guests are gung-ho adventure types or a "contemplative" group that takes things easier, there is pretty much something for everyone. And there are lots of people travelling alone, so don't let that stop you.

The excursions

After two days at sea, when you reach land-ho, out come the Zodiac pontoon boats. Twice daily spins around the various harbours and bays, plus landings on islands that dot the Antarctic Peninsula as well as the continent itself, make for a flurry of activity. Sea kayaking is a great way to interact with the scenery and connect with the water and the wildlife. Penguin colonies, secluded bays of berg-filled waters, lazy seals on thick ice floes, majestic birds, gorgeous glacial ice sculptures, rocky peaks — the photo ops are beyond stunning. Hikes up mountains yield breathtaking views.

Guests game enough to brave an over-night camping trip sleep right on the snowy shore in bivvy bags under the semi-dark night sky. "It doesn't matter how many documentaries you watch, how many pictures you see, how many descriptions you hear from other people, you are never truly prepared before you see Antarctica — and then you are touched," Wood says.

Essentially, the continent is a giant block of rock, covered by ice three to four kilometres thick. In the winter, Antarctica doubles in size with an ice belt all around it, which breaks apart in the summer.

The Wildlife

Within the Antarctic Peninsula area, you can see different kinds of penguins (including the Gentoo, Adélie and Chinstrap) and seals (including the Weddell, Leopard and Crabeater). All feed on krill, an algae-eating form of crustacean. If you're lucky, a Minke whale might follow your boat around just to check things out.

But the penguins are the real stars of the show, comical and seemingly confused; it's hard to keep a straight face. They make a kind of braying noise, a combo of honking and cooing, which is all part of their courtship ritual. Because both male and female penguins incubate the eggs, it's hard to tell them apart.

The males build nests of stones to attract the females, and will mischievously steal pebbles from adjacent nests. They don't seem bothered by people, and some are curious enough to walk right up to you if you stand still.

"But penguins need to have the right of way," says Wood.

"We want no diversions for them — this is their home."

You can see other birds flying alongside the ship, nesting in rocky crags or feasting on krill at the shoreline: blue-eyed shags, Antarctic terns, brown skuas, snowy sheathbills and numerous varieties of petrels.

The eco-friendliness

All Antarctica tour operators uphold the same objectives to keep the region as pristine as possible, following directives outlined in The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed in 1959.

Among other things, this involves preventing the introduction of non-native species to the area, be it plants or disease.

Travellers step through a disinfecting boot bath getting on and off the ship. You leave zero evidence of ever having stepped on Antarctica, except for your footprint.

Hikes around the islands of Antarctica reveal breathtaking views. ALL PHOTOS: TIM STEWART

The penguins are the real stars of the cruise, entertaining travellers with their antics.

A crabeater seal enjoys some South Pole sunshine.

If you go...

- **Getting there.** Air Canada flies to Buenos Aires from Toronto every day at midnight, via Santiago, Chile. Pad the front or back end of this holiday with a stopover in BA for at least a few days.
- **Tours.** For 2013-2014, Quark Expeditions has a few new adventures, including a Greenland cruise and a Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctica voyage that departs from Buenos Aires. It features the first-ever Polar Floating Documentary Film Festival, and was just voted one of Wanderlust Travel magazine's 50 Best Trips of 2013. Check it all out at quarkexpeditions.com.

Travellin' Canadian Darren Parkman tries life in the fast lane

Las Vegas. Forget gambling and partying, whizzing around a racetrack in a $300,000 car is one of Sin City's biggest thrills

THE TRAVELLIN' CANADIAN
Darren Parkman
travel@metronews.ca

As if endless bars, glitzy shows, and nerve-racking blackjack weren't enough, there's an even more exciting way to get the adrenaline pumping in Vegas.

How about putting pedal to metal behind the wheel of a $300,000 racing Ferrari?

If you've got the nerve, the skills and several hundred dollars, Dream Racing at Las Vegas Motorways is for you.

A little backstory: My first car was a beloved '73 Pinto, so I'm no Mario Andretti behind the wheel. Still, I couldn't resist the urge to at least pretend I was, and hopefully emerge in one piece.

Located less than a half hour from the strip, LV Motorways is a genuine race track, complete with grand stands and a challenging track. After a brief but intimidating car simulator session, I found myself suiting up and strapping into an honest to goodness real Ferrari F-450 GT race car.

Just the roar of the engine was enough to strike fear into my heart. Luckily, an experienced driver was right beside me in the passenger seat, shouting commands through my headset and telling me when to hit the gas. And hit the gas I did. Ever wonder what it feels like to be inside a launching rocket? I don't wonder anymore.

All the while, my driving instructor is yelling for me to gear up or gear down with the steering column paddle. Probably the single coolest moment was when I took my first corner at full throttle. Whereas most cars would probably roll multiple times at this point, this amazing Ferrari felt like it was glued to the track even on a sharp bend.

This experience is well worth the price of admission. And I don't miss that Pinto anymore.

Other Las Vegas adventures

- **Indoor skydiving.** Suit up and dive into a tube with a giant fan blasting you upwards. Simulates actual skydiving and free falling. The fan generates winds up to 193 kilometres per hour.
- **Freemont St. zipline.** Soar above the most historic street in Vegas. Flightlinez offers rides for only $20 nightly after 6 p.m.

Darren Parkman has a need for speed at the Las Vegas Motorways. CONTRIBUTED/DARREN PARKMAN

Stocking stuffers

Traveller on your list? Here are some items guaranteed to please

LOREN CHRISTIE
life@metronews.ca

Travelon's airline compliant toiletries come in sheets of 50 and can fit in your pocket. Just dissolve them in water and use them to shave, wash or do your laundry.
Buy a set of two for $10. travelonbags.com.

Baja Books' Pocketsize Phrasebooks come in numerous languages including Spanish, Italian and Japanese. Small, light and easy to use for any loved ones who like to make friends as they explore new countries. $5.95 each. speedylanguage.com.

Whether it's the jungle, beach or desert, the Canadian-made Cool Scarf will keep you cool for 48 hours. Just soak it in clean, cold water for 20 minutes. Polymer crystals hidden inside absorb the water and become a cooling gel. Available in numerous colours and designs for $18. heatcutters.com.

Spare Soles Portable Flats are for the ladies in your life who want a break from their heels, whether in an airport, on the plane or at the hotel. They are compact and foldable and fit in the smallest of purses or pockets. Prices start at $13 US, sparesoles.com.

Want to avoid dry-cleaning bills on the road? Travel Essentials' Laundr' Pac includes detergent, laundry line and sink stopper for those who travel light but want to keep it fresh. $11 at austinhouse.com

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DYNAMIC KOREA

Roasting chestnuts on an open fire

Do people really roast chestnuts?

Yes, says Linda Grimo of Grimo Nut Nursery in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. But the easiest way to do them is on the barbecue, she says. Nuts have been part of the holiday tradition for centuries, with both religious and pagan origins cited by various sources. Although cooks tend to incorporate them in dishes throughout the year, they are a staple of holiday entertaining.

There are options aside from roasting

Sautéing peeled chestnuts in a frying pan is an alternative to barbecuing. If you boil them briefly first, the nuts will "pop right out" of the skin, says Grimo. She cooks them in butter for at least 10 minutes, adding sugar to caramelize them for a sweet treat or garlic or onions if she wants to add them to vegetable or meat dishes.

THE CANADIAN PRESS H/O

Storage

Store-bought nuts in the shell or in jars can be stored at room temperature, but freshly harvested nuts have a high moisture content and need to dry out. Grimo advises people who pick black walnuts, for example, to hang them in a burlap sack in the furnace room for three weeks, preferably with a small fan near them to circulate air through the bag. Chestnuts are the exception and should always be stored in the refrigerator.

The weigh in

Nuts are very good for us, says dietitian Doug Cook, and since they all have different nutrients in varying degrees, eating a variety is best. Ounce for ounce, nuts contain between 150 and 200 calories. The number of servings per person should depend on age, activity level and body weight. **THE CANADIAN PRESS/ DOUG COOK, DIETITIAN AND DIRECTOR OF THE TORONTO CHAPTER OF HEALTHCASTLE.COM.**

Cocktails of the Week

Fig and Maple

Something about fig and maple syrup just goes together. And when you add a little liquor, you have a delicious and warming combination that is perfect for those nights when you're curled up in front of the fire.

- 2 fresh or dried fig
- 1 tbsp ginger marmalade
- 1 oz hot water
- 2 oz Bombay Sapphire
- 2 oz fresh lime juice
- 2 oz ginger beer
- 1 oz maple syrup

1. In a shaker, muddle fig with ginger marmalade and water. Add Bombay Sapphire, fresh lime juice, ginger beer and maple syrup. Add ice and double strain into glass.

PHOTO AND RECIPE COURTESY BOMBAY SAPPHIRE

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Add decadence to your holiday treats

1. Tart shell: In a bowl, the whisk flour, powdered sugar and salt. Add cold butter and quickly rub butter into dry ingredients with pastry cutting tool until incorporated. Add beaten egg and use fork to bring mix together. Dough will be moist, but not wet. Place into a tart pan with a removable bottom. Use fingers to press evenly across bottom of pan and up the sides. Use fork to pierce dough several times. Place in freezer for 1 hour.

2. Place rack in upper third of oven and heat to 180 C (350 F). Grease one side of a piece of foil with butter. Remove tart shell from freezer and press foil into tart shell, butter side down. Bake tart 18 mins. Remove foil and bake 12 mins or until crust is golden brown. Remove from oven and let tart shell cool completely before filling.

3. Filling: In bowl, whip heavy cream until soft peaks form. Set aside.

4. In the bowl of electric stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat cream cheese, almond butter and honey. Beat until smooth and creamy, ensuring all ingredients are incorporated, about 5 mins. Beat in salt, vanilla.

5. Remove the bowl from mixer. Use spatula to stir in one-third of the whipped cream until incorporated. Add remaining whipped cream and fold. Store in refrigerator until ready to use and tart shell is cool enough for filling.

6. Ganache: In bowl, place chopped chocolate. Set aside. Heat heavy cream in microwave until hot and steaming, about 1 minute. Pour cream over chopped chocolate and let stand 30 seconds. Slowly stir chocolate and cream mixture until chocolate is melted and mixture is glossy. Add salt and vanilla extract and stir to combine.

7. Assembly: Smooth the filling into bottom of cooled tart shell, creating smooth top. Pour ganache over top and smooth to edges. Sprinkle with almonds and refrigerate 2 hours before serving.

CREATED BY JOY WILSON OF JOYTHEBAKER.COM FOR THE ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

Ingredients

Tart shell
- 375 ml (1 1/2 cups) flour
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) powdered sugar
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) salt
- 125 ml (1/2 cup/1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1 large egg, beaten

Filling
- 250 ml (1 cup) heavy cream
- 250 g (8 oz) cream cheese
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) almond butter
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) honey
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) salt
- 10 ml (2 tsp) vanilla extract

Ganache
- 175 g (6 oz) good-quality dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 75 ml (1/3 cup) plus 30 ml (2 tbsp) heavy cream
- Pinch of salt
- 5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) sliced almonds

Halfway in and having some doubts?

School switcharoo. It's not uncommon for mixed feelings to make their way into the minds of learners

CHRISTINA PELLEGRINI
TalentEgg.ca

Be cautious of stacking your schedule with similar classes. Try to study a variety of subjects to get a wider perspective and discover your other interests earlier. ISTOCK

So your college or university major isn't what you thought it'd be. Maybe the career opportunities you thought you'd have haven't panned out. Or perhaps you've discovered a new interest.

Fall classes may be over, but there's still time to meet with an academic advisor and change your winter schedule to pursue a new major or specialization.

According to the University of Calgary, the majority of university students switch their majors at least once. Reasons why vary from not being hired to discovering new interests to just plain uncertainty.

What should you do if you're interested in something else?

It's easy to follow your friends, study what your parents tell you to or pursue a career based on how much it pays. But you have to deal with your career choices, Toronto-based community manager Stephanie Fusco says.

Fusco studied politics at Queen's University and hoped to go to law school since she was in high school. But in a fourth-year political communications seminar, she realized that she loved strategy, speech writing and communications more. She graduated from Queen's and later pursued her passion and earned a post-graduate certificate in public relations from Humber College.

"I knew I made the right choice when I found myself putting more effort into my Humber application than I was putting into worrying about whether I'd get into law school," she says. "I'm sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to do and my career is on a path I'm very happy with."

Maybe there's an aspect of your major you love. It may take some reflection or experimentation to figure it out, but try to pursue a degree and a career in the aspect that interests you the most, Fusco adds.

What should you do if you're not sure?

Drawn to different choices

> **"I knew I made the right choice when I found myself putting more effort into my Humber application than I was putting into worrying about whether I'd get into law school."**
>
> Stephanie Fusco
> Toronto-based community manager

If you're unsure about your interests or aspirations, choose an undecided major. According to the University of California, students who enter college with an undeclared major change their focus fewer times than students who declare their major. So when you do make a decision, you'll make it count.

What should you do if you weren't recruited this fall?

Many large companies have already filled their entry level or leadership program positions by now. Don't panic if you haven't been hired. Take rejection as an opportunity to assess your interests, goals and options.

When an accounting firm didn't recruit Nick Guadagnolo last year, the then aspiring auditor and fourth-year accounting student at the Schulich School of Business enrolled in organizational behaviour and marketing classes in his final semester instead.

"An accounting specialization without a CA designation was not what I wanted," Guadagnolo says. "I excelled at, and quite frankly derived so much more pleasure from, the not-so-numerical aspects of the BBA degree."

He studied things like sports marketing, crisis management and operating a family business. He wrote the LSAT in June, applied to law school this fall, travelled frequently and continues to work part-time in HR. For Guadagnolo, there is credence to a plan of action that doesn't involve immediately jumping into the fray. It sounds scary now, but maybe the same applies to you too.

TALENTEGG.CA IS CANADA'S LEADING JOB SITE AND ONLINE CAREER RESOURCE FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND RECENT GRADUATES.

SPORTS 4

Canadian juniors not sleeping on jet-lag issues

Travel concerns. Trip to Ufa, Russia, just one more obstacle on road to world championship

The puck drop for Canada's first three games at the world junior hockey championship in Russia is 2:30 a.m. MST.

Host city Ufa is 10 to 14 hours ahead of the Canadian players' body clocks, depending on what part of the country they're from. A Canadian junior team hasn't travelled this far, or crossed this many time zones, since the 2001 tournament in Moscow. Ufa is another 1,160 kilometres and two time zones to the southeast.

Jet lag and travel fatigue will be major challenges, barriers as significant on the road to gold as the Russians, Swedes and Americans.

Hockey Canada enlisted the expertise of Calgary sleep specialist Dr. Charles Samuels to draw up a plan to combat jet lag and sleep deprivation.

Canadian players, from left, Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin and Jonathan Huberdeau look on during team photos last Friday in Calgary. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"It's basically a survival situation if you look at the frequency of games, the time of the games and then the fact there's virtually no time to recover before the finals." Calgary sleep specialist Dr. Charles Samuels

"I've met with sleep doctors, sports psychologists, neuropsychologists," Canadian head coach Steve Spott said. "I've met with just about every doctor possible."

The accepted rule is it takes a day for every hour of time difference to adapt. Samuels aims to accelerate the adjustment.

Travel fatigue gets less attention than jet lag, he says, but for athletes who travel to far-flung places a lot, it can be damaging to performance. The cumulative effects of extensive travel fatigue the body and mind. Even though the Canadian team is only travelling to Ufa once, the distance and time on planes can catch up with them.

Samuels drew up Canada's plan from a template he created for the Vancouver Canucks in their 2011 Stanley Cup final against the Boston Bruins.

"That's an extreme example, because you're coast to coast, Boston to Vancouver," Samuels said. "We take that experience and translate it to this, which is even more extreme." THE CANADIAN PRESS

'No screwing around'

The Canadian team is currently in training in Finland, a four-hour time difference from Ufa, Russia. The players were on a strict schedule from the moment the wheels went up on their flight from Calgary on Saturday.

- One of the worst things a team can do, says Samuels, is get on the plane exhausted, but it was inevitable some players would be after selection camp.
- "We really talked about on the flight, eye shades, ear plugs, noise-cancellation headphones, all the pillows and comfort you need and the plane is for rest. No screwing around," Samuels said.

Refusing to buckle on value of knuckle

New Blue Jays starter R.A. Dickey began toying with the knuckleball in 2005 while with the Texas Rangers and initially struggled with it. But Dickey continued working on the pitch and has enjoyed solid success with it since joining the New York Mets in 2010. MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

It's quirky, unpredictable and has been described in baseball circles as an oddity and "pitch of last resort."

But the Toronto Blue Jays are banking on R.A. Dickey's dancing knuckleball.

The Jays acquired the National League Cy Young Award winner in a seven-player deal with the Mets on Monday.

Dickey, 38, posted a 20-6 record and 2.73 earned-run average with New York in 2012, but his go-to pitch wasn't a blazing fastball, nasty slider or deep-bending curve. Often he got batters out with the knuckleball, a slow, unassuming pitch that flutters like a butterfly.

By the numbers

4

R.A. Dickey is the fourth pitcher to win the Cy Young only to be traded before the next season, joining David Cone, Pedro Martinez and Roger Clemens.

"This may be a pitch of last resort, which I think is accurate, but think about over history how many last resorts have ended up being successful," Dickey said during a conference call Tuesday. "A lot."

General manager Alex Anthopoulos signed Dickey to a two-year, $25-million US contract extension with a $12-million club option for 2016. Dickey is scheduled to earn $5.25 million in 2013.

"I think Alex should be commended on being able to see past those stereotypical analyzations a lot of guys give the pitch as a gimmick or something that isn't legitimate," Dickey said. "I think we can all admit the past year and the past three years in general have been legitimate."

The good news for Toronto is Dickey started six games against the American League over his three seasons in New York, posting a 4-0 record and 1.71 ERA. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NFL

Judge lowers bond in Cowboy Brent's manslaughter case

A judge ordered Dallas Cowboys nose tackle Josh Brent to wear an electronic monitor pending his trial on an intoxication manslaughter charge in the one-car crash that killed a teammate.

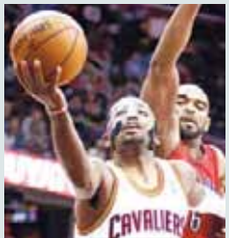
State District Judge Fred Tinsley also lowered Brent's bond from $500,000 US to $100,000 on Tuesday. He ordered Brent not to drink alcohol or drive without a valid driver's licence. Prosecutors say Brent was driving with a suspended licence on the night of the Dec. 8 crash that killed friend and Cowboys practice squad member Jerry Brown. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas Cowboys tackle Josh Brent leaves court in Dallas on Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA

Raptors snap road skid in Cleveland

Jose Calderon scored 23 points, and the Toronto Raptors won on the road for the second time this season by beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 113-99 on Tuesday. It was the Raptors' first road win in 11 games. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Cavs guard Kyrie Irving shoots on Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	18	6	.750	—
Miami	16	6	.727	1
Atlanta	15	7	.682	2
Chicago	14	10	.583	4
Milwaukee	13	10	.565	41/2
Brooklyn	13	11	.542	5
Indiana	13	12	.520	51/2
Boston	12	12	.500	6
Philadelphia	12	13	.480	61/2
Orlando	11	13	.458	7
Charlotte	7	16	.304	101/2
Toronto	7	19	.269	12
Detroit	7	20	.259	121/2
Cleveland	5	21	.192	14
Washington	3	19	.136	14

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	20	4	.833	—
L.A. Clippers	18	6	.750	2
Memphis	16	6	.727	3
San Antonio	19	8	.704	21/2
Golden State	16	8	.667	4
Denver	14	12	.538	7
Utah	14	12	.538	7
Minnesota	12	11	.522	71/2
Houston	12	12	.500	8
Dallas	12	13	.480	81/2
Portland	11	12	.478	81/2
L.A. Lakers	11	14	.440	91/2
Phoenix	10	15	.400	101/2
Sacramento	7	17	.292	13
New Orleans	5	18	.217	141/2

Division leaders ranked in top three positions and best eight teams qualify for playoffs

Tuesday's results

Toronto 113 Cleveland 99
Atlanta 100 Washington 95 OT
Utah 92 Brooklyn 90
Miami 103 Minnesota 92
Chicago 100 Boston 89
Milwaukee 98 Indiana 93
Dallas 107 Philadelphia 100
Denver 112 San Antonio 106
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers
New Orleans at Golden State

Monday's results

Orlando 102 Minnesota 93
Houston 109 New York 96
L.A. Clippers 88 Detroit 76
Memphis 80 Chicago 71
Oklahoma City 107 San Antonio 93
Phoenix 101 Sacramento 90

Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern

Utah at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Detroit at **Toronto**, 7 p.m.
Brooklyn at New York, 7 p.m.
Washington at Orlando, 7 p.m.
Oklahoma City at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Cleveland at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Houston, 8 p.m.
Charlotte at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Milwaukee at Memphis, 9:30 p.m.
Golden State at Sacramento, 10 p.m.
New Orleans at L.A. Clippers, 10:30 p.m.

Thursday's games

Oklahoma City at Minnesota, 7 p.m.
Miami at Dallas, 9:30 p.m.
Denver at Portland, 10 p.m.

RAPTORS 113, CAVALIERS 99

TORONTO (113)

Calderon 10-15 0-0 23, Anderson 6-12 1-2 18, Johnson 6-7 5-5 17, DeRozan 4-9 8-8 16, Lucas 4-7 1-1 11, Kleiza 2-6 6-7 10, Valanciunas 3-6 2-4 8, Davis 2-7 0-0 4, Pietrus 1-4 0-0 3, Ross 1-2 0-0 3. Totals 39-75 23-27 113.

CLEVELAND (99)

Irving 9-16 3-5 23, Varejao 5-12 12-16 22, Gee 6-8 2-3 15, Miles 4-7 3-3 13, Thompson 5-8 0-1 10, Waiters 4-13 0-2 8, Gibson 2-3 0-0 6, Zeller 1-2 0-0 2, Walton 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 36-70 20-30 99.

Toronto	22	27	29	35 —113
Cleveland	29	24	23	23 — 99

3-Point Goals—Toronto 12-24 (Anderson 5-7, Calderon 3-6, Lucas 2-3, Pietrus 1-3, Kleiza 0-3, Ross 1-1, DeRozan 0-1). Cleveland 7-16 (Irving 2-5, Miles 2-4, Gibson 2-3, Waiters 0-2, Gee 1-1, Walton 0-1). **Rebounds—**Toronto 36 (Valanciunas 7, Johnson 6, Anderson 6, DeRozan 5, Calderon 5, Davis 4, Kleiza 1, Lucas 1, Ross 1). Cleveland 33 (Varejao 10, Thompson 9, Gee 4, Miles 4, Irving 3, Zeller 2, Gibson 1). **Assists—**Toronto 25 (Calderon 6). Cleveland 19 (Irving 7). **Total Fouls—**Toronto 24, Cleveland 26.
A—13,233. T—2:18

AHL

Tuesday's result

Peoria 4 Hamilton 3 (SO)

Wednesday's games — All Times Eastern

Abbotsford at Chicago, 12 p.m.
St. John's at Adirondack, 7 p.m.
Springfield at Portland, 7 p.m.
Norfolk at Hershey, 7 p.m.
Albany at Bridgeport, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Lake Erie, 7 p.m.
Rochester at Grand Rapids, 7 p.m.
W-B/Scranton at Binghamton, 7:05 p.m.
Rockford at Milwaukee, 8 p.m.
San Antonio at Texas, 8:30 p.m.

SOCCER

ENGLAND

FA CUP

Tuesday's results

Barrow 1 Macclesfield Town 1
Brentford 4 Bradford City 2, extra time
Notts County 0 Rotherham United 3
Oxford United 2 Accrington Stanley 0

ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP

Tuesday's result

Brighton & Hove Albion 2 Millwall 2

ENGLISH CONFERENCE

Tuesday's results

Alfreton Town 1 Cambridge United 1
Braintree Town 3 Forest Green Rovers 1

SCOTLAND

Tuesday's results

DIVISION ONE

Hamilton Academical vs. Dumbarton (ppd.)

DIVISION TWO

Albion Rovers F.C. 2 Forfar Athletic F.C. 3
East Fife 0 Stranraer F.C. 1

DIVISION THREE

The Rangers FC 3 Annan 0

TRANSACTIONS

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE

BOSTON RED SOX — Agreed to terms with RHP Koji Uehara on a one-year contract.
CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Named Julio Vinas manager and Britt Burns pitching coach of Birmingham (SL); Ryan Newman manager of Winston-Salem (Carolina); Tommy Thompson manager of Kannapolis (SAL); Pete Rose Jr. manager of Great Falls (Pioneer); Bobby Magallanes manager of Bristol (Appalachian); Doug Sisson minor league outfield/baserunning instructor; and Vance Law special assistant to player development.
CLEVELAND INDIANS — Agreed to terms with 3B Mark Reynolds on a one-year contract.
HOUSTON ASTROS — Designated RHP Mickey Storey for assignment.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Agreed to terms with 2B Luis Rodriguez on a minor league contract.
MINNESOTA TWINS — Agreed to terms with RHP Mike Pelfrey on a one-year contract.
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Traded OF Collin Cowgill to the N.Y. Mets for INF Jefry Marte. Agreed to terms with SS Hiroyuki Nakajima on a two-year contract.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Agreed to terms with RHP Ramon Ortiz and OF Ryan Langerhans on minor league contracts and RHP Roberto Hernandez on a one-year contract.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Named Pat Listach minor league infield coordinator; Todd Takayoshi assistant minor league hitting coordinator; Rick Knapp minor league pitching coordinator; John Shoemaker Camelback Ranch-Glendale coordinator of instruction; Franklin Stubbs hitting coach of Albuquerque (PCL); Jody Reed manager, Hector Berrios pitching coach and Orv Franchuk hitting coach of Chattanooga (SL); Carlos Subero manager and Johnny Washington hitting coach of Rancho Cucamonga (Cal); Razor Shines manager, Bill Simas pitching coach and Mike Eylward hitting coach of Great Lakes (MWL); Esteban Lopez hitting coach of Ogden (Pioneer); and P.J. Forbes manager of the Arizona League Dodgers.
MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Named Rick Tomlin minor league pitching coordinator; Bob Skube coach and Aaron Hoback trainer for Nashville (PCL); Steve Patera trainer of Huntsville (SL); Tony Diggs manager and Dwayne Hosey coach of Helena (Pioneer); Nestor Corredor manager and Greg Barajas trainer of the Arizona League Brewers.
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Agreed to terms with LHP John Lannan on a one-year contract.

NBA

HOUSTON ROCKETS — Recalled F/C Donatas Motiejunas from Rio Grande Valley (NBADL).

NFL

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed OL Kraig Urbik to a contract extension. Placed LB Arthur Moats on injured reserve and WR Donald Jones on the reserve/non-football illness list. Signed WR Chris Hogan and LB Greg Lloyd from the practice squad.
CHICAGO BEARS — Placed RB Michael Bush on injured reserve. Signed RB Kahlil Bell.
CLEVELAND BROWNS — Named Alec Scheiner president. Placed LB James-Michael Johnson and DB T.J. Ward on injured reserve. Signed DB Prince Miller and LB Adrian Moten. Signed DL Hall Davis from the practice squad.
JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS — Placed DE Andre Branch and RB Jordan Todman on injured reserve. Released WR Quan Cosby and FB Will Ta'ufo'ou. Signed WR Mike Brown, LB Brandon Marshall and TE Isaiah Stanback from the practice squad and OL Tommie Draheim and WR Brittan Golden to the practice squad.
NEW YORK GIANTS — Re-signed OL Selvish Capers. Waived CB Terrence Frederick.
SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Released TE Evan Moore. Signed TE Sean McGrath from the practice squad.

CFL

TORONTO ARGONAUTS — Released PK/P Noel Prefontaine.

NHL

WASHINGTON CAPITALS — Reassigned F Stanislav Galiev and D Brett Flemming from Reading (ECHL) to Hershey (AHL).
American Hockey League
AHL — Suspended Lake Erie LW Patrick Bordeleau three games.
CONNECTICUT WHALE — Called up D Steven Delisle from Greenville (ECHL).
SPRINGFIELD FALCONS — Recalled D Patrick Cullity from Idaho (ECHL).

NLL

WASHINGTON STEALTH — Traded G Kevin Croswell to Philadelphia for a 2013 third-round draft pick. Released F Jeff Zywicki, F Martin Cummings, G Chris Seidel, F Peter Jacobs, F Jerome Thompson, F Mark Negrin, T T.J. Cowx, T Ryan Johnson and D Ben McCullough.

MLS

COLUMBUS CREW — Re-signed M Danny O'Rourke to a one-year contract.
D.C. UNITED — Released M Stephen King and D Michael Chabala.
FC DALLAS — Signed F Wesley "Pipico" Silva.

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

EAST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	10	4	0	.714	506	315
N.Y. Jets	6	8	0	.429	255	320
Miami	6	8	0	.429	264	279
Buffalo	5	9	0	.357	306	402

SOUTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Houston	12	2	0	.857	394	280
Indianapolis	9	5	0	.643	309	358
Tennessee	5	9	0	.357	285	396
Jacksonville	2	12	0	.143	219	383

NORTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-Baltimore	9	5	0	.643	348	307
Cincinnati	8	6	0	.571	355	293
Pittsburgh	7	7	0	.500	302	291
Cleveland	5	9	0	.357	280	310

WEST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Denver	11	3	0	.786	409	274
San Diego	5	9	0	.357	299	312
Oakland	4	10	0	.286	263	402
Kansas City	2	12	0	.143	195	367

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EAST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Washington	8	6	0	.571	381	350
Dallas	8	6	0	.571	327	338
N.Y. Giants	8	6	0	.571	373	304
Philadelphia	4	10	0	.286	253	375

SOUTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Atlanta	12	2	0	.857	371	259
New Orleans	6	8	0	.429	389	379
Tampa Bay	6	8	0	.429	354	349
Carolina	5	9	0	.357	296	319

NORTH

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-Green Bay	10	4	0	.714	344	292
Minnesota	8	6	0	.571	319	308
Chicago	8	6	0	.571	321	240
Detroit	4	10	0	.286	330	380

WEST

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
x-San Francisco	10	3	1	.750	357	218
Seattle	9	5	0	.643	350	219
St. Louis	6	7	1	.464	258	315
Arizona	5	9	0	.357	224	302

x — clinched playoff berth; **y** — clinched division.

WEEK 15

Monday's result

Tennessee 14 N.Y. Jets 10

Sunday's results

Washington 38 Cleveland 21
Miami 24 Jacksonville 3
Denver 34 Baltimore 17
Atlanta 34 N.Y. Giants 0
Minnesota 36 St. Louis 22
Houston 29 Indianapolis 17
Green Bay 21 Chicago 13
New Orleans 41 Tampa Bay 0
Seattle 50 Buffalo 17
Carolina 31 San Diego 7
Arizona 38 Detroit 10
Dallas 27 Pittsburgh 24
Oakland 15 Kansas City 0
San Francisco 41 New England 34

WEEK 16

Saturday's game — All Times Eastern

Atlanta at Detroit, 8:30 p.m.

Sunday's games

Minnesota at Houston, 1 p.m.
Tennessee at Green Bay, 1 p.m.
Oakland at Carolina, 1 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Jets, 1 p.m.
New England at Jacksonville, 1 p.m.
Indianapolis at Kansas City, 1 p.m.
New Orleans at Dallas, 1 p.m.
St. Louis at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m.
Buffalo at Miami, 1 p.m.
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 1 p.m.
Washington at Philadelphia, 1 p.m.
Cleveland at Denver, 4:05 p.m.
N.Y. Giants at Baltimore, 4:25 p.m.
Chicago at Arizona, 4:25 p.m.
San Francisco at Seattle, 8:20 p.m.

LATE MONDAY

TITANS 14, JETS 10

N.Y. Jets	3	0	7	0—10
Tennessee	0	7	7	0—14

First Quarter

NYJ—FG Folk 22, 4:17.

Second Quarter

Ten—C.Johnson 94 run (Bironas kick), 8:53.

Third Quarter

NYJ—Cumberland 17 pass from Sanchez (Folk kick), 3:19.
Ten—Locker 13 run (Bironas kick), :20.

Fourth Quarter

A—69,143.

TEAM STATISTICS

	NYJ	Ten
First downs	20	12
Total Net Yards	253	294
Rushes-yards	30-146	30-167
Passing	107	127
Punt Returns	1-7	2-3
Kickoff Returns	2-52	3-75
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	4-55
Comp-Att-Int	13-29-4	13-22-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	4-24	4-22
Punts	6-42.3	10-39.1
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	0-0
Penalties-Yards	4-23	14-111
Time of Possession	30:16	29:44

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING—N.Y. Jets, Greene 13-68, McKnight 4-29, Powell 6-28, Tebow 3-15, Sanchez 4-6. Tennessee, C.Johnson 21-122, Locker 7-43, Q.Johnson 2-2.
PASSING—N.Y. Jets, Sanchez 13-28-4-131, Tebow 0-1-0-0. Tennessee, Locker 13-22-0-149.
RECEIVING—N.Y. Jets, Cumberland 4-53, Edwards 3-47, Powell 2-15, Greene 2-1, Kerley 1-11, Reuland 1-4. Tennessee, Washington 4-62, Wright 3-31, Preston 2-31, Stevens 2-16, Britt 1-7, Q.Johnson 1-2.
MISSED FIELD GOALS—Tennessee, Bironas 46 (BK).

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2013 SILVERADO CHEYENNE EXT 4X4

MSRP ~~$39,335~~

GM EMPLOYEE PRICE^^ $29,355*

- 60,000km Longer Powertrain Warranty than Ford F-150 and RAM¥
- Available Best-In-Class 4X4 V8 Fuel Efficiency‡‡

25 MPG HIGHWAY
11.2 L/100 KM HWY | 15.9 L/100 KM CITY▾

1LT MODEL SHOWN

2013 EQUINOX LS

MSRP ~~$28,635~~

GM EMPLOYEE PRICE^^ $25,928*

- Awarded the Consumer's Digest Best Buy Four Years Running+
- Standard Bluetooth and OnStar® with RemoteLink Mobile App~

46 MPG HIGHWAY
6.1L/100 KM HWY | 9.2 L/100 KM CITY▾

LTZ MODEL SHOWN

2012 CRUZE LS AIR & AUTO

MSRP ~~$20,660~~

GM EMPLOYEE PRICE^^ $17,247*

- 2012 Consumer's Digest Best Buy Award+
- Best-In-Class Highway Fuel Efficiency**

50 MPG HIGHWAY
5.6 L/100 KM HWY | 9.2 L/100 KM CITY▾

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Civic hits refresh button

ALL PHOTOS WHEELBASE

Features

The new Honda Civic's feature list is long, so here's some highlights: Bluetooth for audio and device hookup, heated front seats, read out and respond for text messages and navigation upgraded with voice recognition, plus a "three-view" rear camera. In fact, a rear-view camera is now standard on EX models.

New stylish features

2013 Honda Civic fast facts

- **Sales.** Canada's top selling car line
- **Engine.** 140 hp, 1.8 litre four-cylinder. Si Coupes and Sedans upgraded to 201 hp.
- **Location.** Most models built in Alliston, Ont.
- **Base price (incl.destination).** $15,400

Style changes

The new model flaunts a degree of exterior style and interior finesse not quite evident on the 2012 Civic. In a mid-cycle refresh like this one, about all you're able to change on the outside are front and rear fascia, hood and trunk panels and the wheels. Honda has done that and all to great effect.

Design

The look is wider and lower — slightly more sporty and premium. It now sports exterior bits you've been seeing on higher-end models, like complex headlights, black mesh grille with chrome accents, integrated fog lights (on higher trim lines) and larger, more horizontal taillights that flow into the sides of the car.

Review. New model has learned from mistakes of 2012 Civic

MIKE GOETZ
Drive@metronews.ca

This newly minted 2013 Honda Civic sedan is one unusual automobile. Not weird like it runs on goat cheese, or some other dairy product.

Unusual in that the refresh bestowed upon it for 2013 comes only one model year after it was completely reborn. About 18 months ago, that all-new and ninth-generation 2012 Honda Civic came out to mixed reviews — not so bad that it had any problem at all retaining its mantel as Canada's top-selling passenger car.

But Honda must have been clearly spooked about its initial reception and the subsequent and serious competitive moves made by its competitors in this all-important compact car segment — Canada's largest. Toyota Corolla and Mazda3 have always battled Civic hard, but now there's a whole new and energetic crowd banging on the door (Chevrolet Cruise, Ford Focus, Hyundai Elantra, Dodge Dart, etc.)

"The days when the Civic was just a car for the first time buyer are gone," says Dave Gardner, vice-president of sales and marketing for Honda Canada. "We're now appealing to a significant number of customers who are downsizing from intermediate or larger vehicles."

On top of everything else it offers, it's quieter on the road thanks to new acoustic measures and the new suspension bits, which also reduce NVH. Good on Honda to make this move, and good on Civic. Your place on top of the Canadian sales charts will surely continue.

Quoted

"The days when the Civic was just a car for the first time buyer are gone."

Dave Gardner, vice-president of sales and marketing for Honda Canada

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© 2012 Mercedes-Benz Canada Inc. **2013 C 350/GLK 350 4MATIC™ shown above, National MSRP $44,750/$44,900.** **Total price of $42,630/$47,540 and down payment include freight/PDI of $1,995, dealer admin fee of $495, air-conditioning levy of $100, EHF tires, filters, batteries of $16.00, PPSA up to $27.80 and AMVIC fee of $6.25. *Lease and finance offers based on the 2013 C 300 4MATIC™/all-new 2013 GLK 350 4MATIC™ available only through Mercedes-Benz Financial Services on approved credit for a limited time. Lease example based on $358/$468 per month for 48/39 months. Down payment or equivalent trade of $7,080/$6,530 plus security deposit of $400/$500 and applicable taxes due at lease inception. MSRP starting at $39,990/$44,900. Lease APR of 2.9% applies. Total obligation is $24,633/$25,256. 18,000 km/year allowance ($0.20/km for excess kilometres applies). Finance example is based on a 60-month term and a finance APR of 0.9% and an MSRP of $39,990/$44,900. Monthly payment is $588/$663 (excluding taxes) with $6,639/$7,130 down payment or equivalent trade in. Cost of borrowing is $795/$897 for a total obligation of $41,897/$46,909. Vehicle licence, insurance, and registration are extra. Dealer may lease or finance for less. Offers may change without notice and cannot be combined with any other offers. See your authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer for details or call the Mercedes-Benz Customer Relations Centre at 1-800-387-0100. Offer ends December 31, 2012. Additional 1% lease and finance rate reduction offer ends December 22nd.

With a mechanic's nod you can bank on your Subaru Baja

Second Gear.
2003-2006 Subaru Baja

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
Drive@metronews.ca

Subaru's Baja, which was available in Canada from 2003 to 2006, was called a 'crossover' vehicle — and featured four doors, roof-rails and a truck-bed in back. A trap door could be opened between the bed and passenger compartment, allowing for extended length cargo to be accommodated.

BAJA's cabin was available with leather, a sunroof, CD player and aluminum trim, so owners after a luxurious and flexible hauler will likely be impressed. A six-way power driver's seat, roof-mounted activity lights, and a bed-cover were available, too.

PHOTO:HANDOUT

Common Issues

A rough idle could indicate an oil-flow problem on turbo-charged engines, caused by a clogged screen in an oil connection. Automatic transmissions could have a leak at the transmission stud, which presents itself as a blood-red fluid apparent near the engine's oil filter. Have a used Subaru Baja jacked into the air at a dealership so a mechanic can inspect crucial parts for damage or abuse. Any leaks, scrapes, dents or excessive rust can be called into pricing negotiations. While there, a mechanic can check for the performance of any recall-related work, in this case dealing with the water pump pulley, a loosely-mounted oil-control valve and a defective 'park rod' in the automatic transmission.

Engine

Power came from a 2.5 litre boxer engine, developing 165 horsepower driving all four wheels via a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual gearbox. After the first year of sales, a turbo-charged engine was available with 210 horsepower.

What owners like

Turbocharged performance, relative fuel efficiency, flexibility, rarity and 'cool factor' were all highly rated, as was performance in snowy or slippery conditions.

What owners dislike

Sluggish performance on automatic/non-turbo models, a small bed and seating for only four occupants were among the most common complaints.

Verdict

Many pickups and SUVs larger and thirstier than the Baja have a mile-long list of concerns and recalls to watch out for, so if Baja's right for you (and you can find one), buy confidently if the model checks out mechanically.

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GT model shown

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7.1 L/100 km city — 40 mpg‡

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Finance from $117† bi-weekly AT 0% APR FOR 84 months

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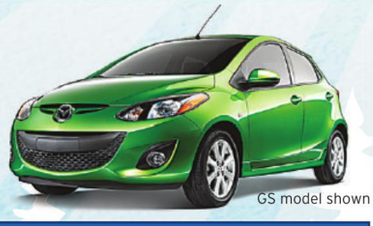

GS model shown

2012 MAZDA2

Starting from $13,765* including $2,000 CASH DISCOUNT Ω

GT-V6 model shown

2013 MAZDA6

Starting from $20,995* including $5,000 CASH DISCOUNT Ω

GT model shown

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▲No purchase necessary. Closes Jan 2/13 at 11:59 p.m. ET. Open to legal residents of Canada (age of majority). Earn one entry with the purchase, finance or lease of a new 2012/2013 Mazda vehicle from a participating authorized Mazda dealership in Canada. One prize available in each of the following regions: (i) West (BC, YK); (ii) Prairies (AB, SK, MB, NWT); (iii) Central (ON, NV); (iv) Quebec (QC); and Atlantic (NFLD, NB, NS and PE). Each prize consists of a reimbursement of the value of the vehicle purchased (inclusive of fees and taxes) – up to a maximum of $30,000 CAD. Skill-testing question required. Odds depend on number of eligible entries. Full rules (including no purchase entry details) at www.mazda.ca. †0% purchase financing for up to 84 months is available on select new 2012 and 2013 vehicles. Terms vary by model. Using a finance price of $15,765 for 2012 Mazda2 GX (B51B52AA00)/$21,215 for 2012 Mazda6 GS-14 (G4S163AA00)/$33,535 for 2012 CX-9 GS AWD (QX5B82AA00)/$25,115 for 2013 CX-5 GX (NVXK63AA00) at a rate of 0.99%/0%/0%/0%/0%/3.99%, APR, the cost of borrowing for an 84-month term is $599/$0/$0/$0/$3,372, bi-weekly payment is $90/$117/$144/$184/$158 total finance obligation is $16,324/$21,215/$26,120/$33,535/$28,827. CX-9 price includes $5,975 down payment. Finance price includes block heater, freight & PDI. Taxes are extra and required at the time of purchase. Other terms available and vary by model. †† No payments for 90 Days (payment deferral) offer is available on all new in-stock 2012 or 2013 Mazda models and applies to purchase finance offers on approved credit. No interest will accrue during the first 60 days of the finance contract. After this period interest will begin to accrue and the purchaser will repay the principal and interest monthly over the term of the contract. ΩCash Discount Offers available on select 2012/2013 Mazda models and cannot be combined with finance offers. Cash discounts vary by model/trim level. * The advertised price of $13,765/$18,995/$20,995/$33,610/$25,215 for 2012 Mazda2 GX (B51B52AA00)/Mazda3 GS-SKY (D45K62AA00)/2013 Mazda6 GS-14 (G4S163AA00)/CX-5 GX (NVXK63AA00) includes block heater, freight & PDI, plus a cash discount of $2,000/$2,000/$5,000/$6,000/$0. The selling price adjustment applies to the purchase and is deducted from the negotiated pre-tax price and cannot be combined with subsidized purchase financing or leasing rates. As shown, price for 2012 Mazda2 GS (B53B52AA00)/2013 Mazda6 GT-V6 (G4T183AA00)/CX-9 GT (QXTB82AA00)/2013 CX-5 GT (NXTK83AA00) is $19,965/$39,665/$47,960/$34,865 including block heater, air tax and freight and PDI. All prices include freight & PDI of $1,495/$1,695/$1,895 for Mazda2/Mazda3 GS-SKY, Mazda6/CX-9, CX-5. PPSA, licence, insurance, taxes, down payment and other dealer charges are extra and may be required at the time of purchase. Dealer may sell/lease for less. Dealer trade may be necessary on certain vehicles. Lease and Finance on approved credit for qualified customers only. Offers valid Dec 1, 2012-Jan 2, 2013 while supplies last. Prices and rates subject to change without notice. Visit mazda.ca or see your dealer for complete details. ‡5.7 L/100 km (50 MPG) Highway/7.8 L/100 km (36 MPG) City – Based on ENERGUIDE Fuel Consumption Rating for the 2013 Mazda CX-5 with 6-speed manual transmission. 4.9 L/100 km (58 MPG) Highway/7.1 L/100 km (40 MPG) City – Based on ENERGUIDE Fuel Consumption Rating for the 2012 Mazda3 GS-SKY sedan with 6-speed automatic transmission. These estimates are based on Government of Canada approved criteria and testing methods. Actual fuel consumption may vary. MPG is listed in Imperial gallons. ◆Based on Highway driving only.

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© 2012 Mercedes-Benz Canada Inc. 2011 model shown. *0.9% financing only available through Mercedes-Benz Financial Services on approved credit for a limited time. Only available for finance for up to 36 months and only applicable to MY 2008-2011 Certified Mercedes-Benz (less than 140,000 km) and MY 2008-2011 Certified smart models (less than 100,000 km). Finance example based on a 2008 model: $20,000 at 0.9% per annum equals $563.30 per month for 36 months. Cost of borrowing is $279 for a total obligation of $20,279. Down payment may be required. Licence, insurance, taxes and PPSA are extra. Additional provincial-specific fees, taxes and charges may be extra. Dealer may lease or finance for less. See your authorized Mercedes-Benz dealer for details or call the Mercedes-Benz Customer Relations Centre at 1-800-387-0100. Offer ends December 31st, 2012.

Just another toy among thousands? Some car buffs beg to differ. HANDOUT

Hoping for a gift with wheels under the tree

The golden olden days. Hobby-grade slot cars continue their cult status with children and adults alike

AUTO PILOT
Mike Goetz
drive@metronews.ca

Christmas morning is always fun. But it can never be as fun as it was on those magical Christmas mornings, when you were in your prime toy-yearning years.

First you don't get the Santa thing. Then, Santa and Christmas morning are everything. Then you gradually get jaded by the whole thing and start getting up later and later on Christmas morning. The window is actually quite small for really getting into it, but when you're into it, you're into it hard.

And it was in that glorious window that Santa once dropped off for me the actual Eldon slot car racing set I feverishly desired.

Net result: best Christmas present ever.

I still have the two slot cars that came with the set — an original Ford Mustang Fastback and a Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Coupe.

Back then (the mid-to-late 1960s), slot car racing sets were one of the prime Christmas toys for boys.

"You'd go to an Eaton's store back then, and there would be four or five tracks set up for kids to play and try," remembers Ernie Mossetti, who has been a slot car retailer since 1988, and a slot car aficionado virtually all his life. "I was born in 1956, and got my first slot car in 1964."

The slot car's reign on top of the toy kingdom didn't last long. Mossetti says things were pretty much over by the late '60s.

Slot car sets are now just another toy among thousands. But "hobby grade" slot cars continue their cult status with adult aficionados, and some young folks as well.

Vroom

"Fortunately there are still enough dads out there who had one, and who want to buy a set for their kids ... or say they are buying a set for their kids."

Ernie Mossetti, slot car retailer and aficionado
On the popularity of the classic toy

Mossetti currently operates two slot car related concerns — raceworldcanada.com and mr.slotcar.ca — the former's an online store and the latter a line of professional grade slot cars designed by Mossetti (he's an industrial designer by trade). He notes that sets from Germany's Carrera and Britain's Scalextric continue to dominate the current market.

Mossetti says kids don't get exposed to the slot car world like they used to — there is little advertising or promotion. And these days, you have to go to a hobby store or an online store to get your actual slot car stuff.

"Fortunately there are still enough dads out there who had one, and who want to buy a set for their kids … Or say they are buying the set for their kids."

Ouch, I resemble that last remark.

When our son, Jared, was four, he got from Santa a starter Scalextric set, with an Indy 500 theme. In retrospect, he was too young for it. Whenever he and his buddies played with it, they would simply hold the controller throttle on full blast, all the time. The beautifully detailed Indy racers were flying and crashing all over the living room. As designated first responder, I was very busy retrieving the cars and setting them back gently on the track, only to see them fly off of the track on the next lap. But I didn't mind. They moved onto other activities eventually. Then I would have the track all to myself.

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2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland shown.§

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Wise customers read the fine print: ♦ §, ‡, ‡. The Wonderful Ride Holiday Event offers are limited time offers which apply to retail deliveries of selected new and unused models purchased from participating dealers on or after December 1, 2012. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Offers subject to change and may be extended without notice. See participating dealers for complete details and conditions. •$37,798 Purchase Price applies to: 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo (26E) only. Pricing includes freight ($1,595) and excludes licence, insurance, registration, any dealer administration fees and other applicable fees and applicable taxes. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell for less. See participating dealers for complete details. ♦Holiday Bonus Cash up to $1,000 is available on most new 2012/2013 models, excluding the following: Chrysler 200 LX, Dodge Caliber, Dart, Grand Caravan CVP, Journey; CVP/SE, Avenger, Viper, Jeep Compass Sport 4x2 & 4x4, Wrangler 2 Dr Sport, Grand Cherokee SRT8, Ram 1500 Reg Cab & ST & SXT Trucks, Ram Cab & Chassis, Ram Cargo Van, FIAT 500 Abarth and 2012 FIAT 500 Pop models. Bonus Cash will be deducted from the negotiated price after taxes. See your dealer for complete details. ‡4.99% lease financing available through WS Leasing Ltd. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Westminster Credit Union ("WS") to qualified retail customers on new 2012/2013 Chrysler, Jeep, Dodge, Ram and FIAT models at participating dealers in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Territories. Lease offer is based on a 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo with a Purchase Price of $35,298 including $1,000 Holiday Bonus Cash and $2,500 Lease Delivery Credit. Purchase Price includes freight ($1,595) and excludes licence, insurance, registration, dealer charges and taxes. Lease offer is based on a 60 month term at 4.99% APR and 130 bi-weekly payments of $208. Down payment of $0 and applicable taxes, $475 WS registration fee and first bi-weekly payment are due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is $27,021. Taxes, licence, registration, insurance, dealer charges and other applicable fees are additional. ‡Based on a 60 month term at 4.99% APR and 130 bi-weekly payments of $208. Down payment of $0 and applicable taxes, $475 WS registration fee and first bi-weekly payment are due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is $27,021. Taxes, licence, registration, insurance, dealer charges and other applicable fees are additional. ‡ Lease financing for up to 96 months available on the new 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee (26E) models to qualified customers on approved credit through Royal Bank of Canada, Scotiabank, TD Auto Finance and Ally Credit Canada. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell for less. See your dealer for complete details. Example: 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee (26E) with a Purchase Price of $37,798 financed at 4.49% over 96 months with $0 down payment equals 208 bi-weekly payments of $216 with a cost of borrowing of $7,226 and a total obligation of $45,024. Pricing includes freight ($1,595) and excludes licence, insurance, registration, any dealer administration fees and other applicable fees and taxes. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell for less. $2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland shown. Price including applicable Consumer Cash Discount ($2,040). Pricing includes freight ($1,595) and excludes licence, insurance, registration, any dealer administration fees and other applicable taxes. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell for less. ¥2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee Overland shown. Price including applicable Consumer Cash Discount ($2,040). Pricing includes freight ($1,595) and excludes licence, insurance, registration, any dealer administration fees and other applicable taxes. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Dealer may sell for less. ♦Based on 2012 Ever-Glide Fuel Consumption Guide ratings published by Natural Resources Canada. Government of Canada test methods used. Your actual fuel economy will vary based on powertrain, driving habits and other factors. 2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee – Hwy 8.8 L/100 km (32 MPG) and City: 13.0 L/100 km (22 MPG). ~The SiriusXM logo is a registered trademark of SiriusXM Satellite Radio Inc. *Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler Group LLC.

SCAN HERE
FOR MORE GREAT OFFERS

Parts Department

Whether it's a Christmas gift, a novelty birthday gift or just something for yourself, here are some ideas for unique automotive-inspired presents.

WHEELBASE MEDIA

Lighten your load

Fumbling around in the dark while trying to find/remove the contents of your pickup's load bed is a thing of the past if you have installed an Automatic Cargo Light from 4zproducts. It automatically switches on when the tailgate is lowered. Prices range from $30 US to $100 through shop.4zproducts.com.

This tops them all

Toting extra gear on top of your vehicle can be relatively easy and inexpensive with the Car Top Duffle Bag from Rightline Gear. This 91–by 40–by 32–centimetre waterproof unit can be strapped to the roof without needing to be secured to a rack, although that's likely not recommended for really heavy loads. Bag has a suggested list price of $70 US. For full info and a complete rundown of retailers, go to rightlinegear.com.

Take charge

When storing your vehicle's battery for a lengthy period, it would be helpful to know if and when it might require recharging. OptiMate's Charge Now Warning Flasher attaches to your battery and will alert you should its power level drop below 50 per cent. The Charge Now Flasher is available for sealed automotive batteries or for marine–type wet–cell batteries and sells for $20 US from smartchargers.com.

You gotta have pull

If you or someone you know just has to have the latest and greatest tools in his or her shop, the Easypuller from Las Vegas Tools should definitely be on the shopping list. This award–winning product is designed to remove virtually any stubborn fastener. That includes rusted and seized–up bolts screws, nails, cotter pins, clips, seals and so on. The Easypuller sells for $40 US from lasvegastool.com.

Ford attempts to grow car from roots up

Driving Force. Automakers are experimenting with bio-materials for car parts and the green trend is picking up speed

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

Along with food, many farmers are growing car parts these days.

Not directly, of course, but several automakers are experimenting with plant materials, including Ford, which operates a Bio-Materials Lab at its Research and Advanced Engineering Center in Dearborn, Mich.

"We have been working for the last 12 years on replacing petroleum products with bio-materials," says Debbie Mielewski, technical leader for plastics research. "People originally laughed at us until oil hit $100 a barrel, since there are 300 pounds (136 kg) of plastic in each vehicle."

The earliest work was on foam made with soybean oil. The first examples were too brittle, but researchers finally came up with a viable product made with 40 per cent plant oil. It was initially used for seats in the 2007 Mustang, and is now found in every vehicle made in North America. "It saves five million pounds of oil every year," Mielewski says. "We're now working on recycled soy foam, and we're having some success with that."

Currently, the lab is experimenting with such things as rice hulls, coconut shells, and other agricultural waste. But it isn't enough just to add new materials to plastic, and researchers have to look at a wide range of issues, including how the composite handles extreme heat or cold, how strong it is, and if it can be produced on a large scale. The team even has to consider such things as whether people with plant allergies have any reaction to the finished plastic.

The seasonal nature of agriculture must also be considered, and there has to be a steady supply of the bio-material. Some crops also have to be rejected because industrial use would infringe on food production.

In addition to plant products, the lab also looks at new uses for recycled materials. It has had success with shredded soft drink bottles, which are turned into carpets and with denim waste from jean production, which is made into carpet backing and insulation. The researchers are even considering paper money, which the U.S. Mint shreds and sends to landfills when it gets too worn, as an ingredient in composite plastic.

Quoted

"We're now working on recycled soy foam and we're having some success with that."

Debbie Mielewski, technical leader for plastic research at Ford.
On the new products they've been experimenting with.

Ford is one of several car companies experimenting with bio-materials. HANDOUT

Sexy new models make L.A. debut

Autoknow. It's the perfect town for an auto show that's about speed, beauty and going green

TODD D. BURLAGE
wheelbasemedia.com

Rawrrr: The 2014 Jaguar XFR-S.

Ecology, speed, style and fantasy. They're just a few trademarks that help define the pomp of the Los Angeles Auto Show every year when this important event kicks-off the North American auto show season.

For 10 days each fall — Nov. 30 to Dec. 9 this year — the L.A. Convention Center becomes center stage for a broad spectrum of model debuts and a lineup of vehicles designed to impress a diverse California consumer base from wealthy movie stars to eco warriors. In 2011, more than 920,000 enthusiast and potential buyers attended the L.A. show, leaving it second only to the Detroit Auto Show in importance to the North American auto industry.

The 2012 L.A. show didn't necessarily feature the pizzazz from recent years. Vehicle improvements seemed to outweigh any groundbreaking innovations. But a clear manufacturer focus during a critical time for the industry raised the stakes at a show that always provides a sneak peak into consumer interest and sales projections.

Even with sagging economies crippling new-car sales in Europe and China, automakers from around the world debuted more than 50 new models in L.A., all trying to capitalize on a growing consumer confidence and improving economy here in North America.

According to a story in the Orange County Register daily newspaper, California accounts for more than 10 per cent of the 14 million vehicles sold each year in the United States. And with a demographic built on green — of both the income and the eco variety — the L.A. Auto Show is the perfect platform for automakers to allure potential buyers.

What's going on out there?

Many of the models may have changed, but the West Coast message remains the same: In terms of luxury, technology, styling and efficiency, more is never too much. Sports cars are faster, fuel efficiency is better, battery range is longer, emissions are lower, technology is easier and all of these advancements were featured on stages throughout the 2012 show.

From the sexy look of the 2014 Jaguar XFR-S to the intriguing 2014 Mazda6 clean-burning diesel — the first non-German powered diesel sedan to hit U.S. soil in 30 years — the L.A. menu lived up to its billing as both diverse and eclectic, featuring more than 1,000 of the latest vehicles.

Luxury is more of a necessity than a frill in and around Hollywood. And with growing demand in the upscale-sedan class, the gas-sipping 2013 Audi A8 diesel and its 36 m.p.g, along with the tech-heavy 2014 Honda Acura RLX, were two headliners looking for consumer love during the L.A. show.

For speed freaks, Mercedes Benz brought its 2014 SLS AMG Black Series prototype, where 622 horsepower takes you to 100 k/h from rest in 3.5 seconds. Down the hall, Porsche grabbed some attention with its new 2014 Cayman model, a leaner yet meaner version that rockets to 100 km/h in 4.4 seconds.

What a babe: The BMW i8 Spyder plug-in gets the Wheelbase vote for Concept Car of the Year.

How does the future look?

Air quality — or lack thereof — and a more eco-conscious lifestyle on the left coast made the debuts of several gas-electric hybrids and plug-in vehicles an important battleground for automakers.

- **Green hot.** Dozens of the hottest green rides — from frugal to fast — were on stage, all trying to attract buyers from a U.S. state that really and truly drives the North American gas-electric hybrid and all-electric markets.
- **Conservative.** For those with more conservative tastes, or budgets, Ford debuted its 2013 C-Max Energi plug-in electric. This compact utility vehicle takes the usual hybrid a little further by increasing the electric-only range to a Ford-claimed 33 kilometres. Once the batteries are depleted to the point where they cannot run the car by themselves, the C-Max Energi reverts to standard hybrid operation.
- **Fusion fun.** Ford enjoyed a strong presence at the L.A. show, taking home awards when Green Car Journal named the 2013 Ford Fusion sedan the green car of the year. It beat out the 2013 Dodge Dart Aero, 2013 Ford C-Max, 2013 Mazda CX-5 and even the popular 2013 Toyota Prius C for top honours.
- **Sultry.** The eye-catching BMW i8 Spyder plug-in — our choice for concept car of the year — offers a glimpse into just how hot the colour green can really be, and to where engine technology is heading. This sultry, two-seat, gas-electric combo jumps from standstill to 100 k/h in five seconds and can go 100 kilometres on just 3.3 litres of fuel.

TODD BURLAGE IS A WRITER WITH WHEELBASE MEDIA. YOU CAN MESSAGE HIM USING THE CONTACT FORM AT WHEELBASE-MEDIA.COM. WHEELBASE MEDIA IS A WORLDWIDE PROVIDER OF AUTOMOTIVE NEWS AND FEATURES STORIES.

For speed freaks: The Mercedes Benz 2014 SLS AMG Black Series prototype can take you to 100 k/h from rest in 3.5 seconds. ALL PHOTOS HANDOUT

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The Honda Ridgeline is handy as heck

Just because the Ridgeline isn't a diesel burning machine doesn't make it any less of a truck. JUSTIN PRITCHARD/FOR METRO

Pickup truck.
Unique design adds tremendous flexibility

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
Drive@metronews.ca

I'm a Northern Ontario boy living in the land of Dodge Ram 2500s, Ford Super Dutys and GMC Sierra HDs. People up here love their diesel-powered torque, low-range gearing and tens of thousands of pounds of towing capacity.

The Honda Ridgeline is a truck with none of these attributes — and one considered "less" of a truck by many of my misinformed, diesel-burning friends.

Face it, guys. Driving a Ford Super Duty to the grocery store, baseball game or mall is a massive waste of fuel. At least it'll make quick work of towing that utility trailer a few times a year, eh?

Ridgeline only comes with a V6. It's decent on fuel and as powerful as anyone needs. It's 4x4 system is, usually, front-wheel drive. It's got a smallish box.

But, if you don't regularly need the services of a great big towing rig, it's a truck that makes plenty of sense. Moreso if you have a family, love camping, own a four-legged friend or two, or like to partake in outdoor sports.

A clever, flexible design ideology lies at the Ridgeline's functional core.

The large rear seats offer heaps of room for two or three full-sized adults and have a generous storage space beneath them, helping occupants stay organized. And those rear seats flip up and out of the way in about three seconds, creating a large cargo area that'll securely accept a bike or two, a flat-screen TV, a few golden retrievers, or a load of groceries. Or some of the above and a passenger, if you leave one of the seats in its "seat" position.

The box is short — but adequate for a dirt bike, motorcycle or a small quad. The firewall at the front of the bed has built-in notches for holding tires in place, which work with tie-downs to make securing two-wheeled toys a breeze.

The tailgate opens out, like a door, or downwards, like a tailgate, too. Four lights illuminate the bed as needed. It's full of clever, thoughtful touches. Underneath, Ridgeline's famous "under-bed compartment" adds a trunk similar in capacity to that of a mid-sized car. It's lockable, waterproof, and is illuminated and drainable.

If you've got, say, three buddies and two dirtbikes along for the ride, other gear can be kept out of the way in this "truck trunk" without chewing up interior space or being tossed around in the box.

Soggy life jackets, groceries, ice and beverages, coolers, firewood, sandy beach towels and the like all found a home in here on my test dive. Hose it out at the coin wash when you're done.

Ridgeline is also comfortable, rides like a big car, and isn't a giant, imposing, clumsy, thirsty thing to drive. It's almost like a minivan — but cooler and more capable and without the jokes. That's a good thing for many.

Honda's hit the mark here with a truck that's perfect for what 99 per cent of pickup owners use their trucks for 99 per cent of the time.

I came away from my test wondering if I'd ever driven a vehicle so handy and flexible.

Honda Ridgeline Sport

- **Engine.** 3.5 litre VTEC V6, 250 horsepower
- **Drivetrain.** Variable Torque Management (VTM) 4x4 with driver selectable "LOCK" mode
- **Towing Capacity.** 2,268 kg
- **Transmission.** 5-speed automatic
- **Price as Tested.** $37,790

Volvo's reliable, compact wagon delivers refined performance on the road

Second Gear.
2005-2011 Volvo V50

JUSTIN PRITCHARD
Drive@metronews.ca

The V50 served up Volvo's refined brand of stylish luxury and performance in a compact wagon with an eye for flexibility and space.

Noted for a laid-back driving experience, unique looks and a laundry-list of safety implements, it was a machine popular with families, outdoors enthusiasts and active couples alike.

Feature content included premium audio, a sunroof, leather seating, adaptive lights, an auto-dimming rearview mirror and plenty more.

Common Issues

Check for proper operation of the external temperature readout, climate control system, audio head-unit and all door-mounted controls, including the power locks, mirrors and windows. Ditto proper operation from the remote key fobs. Look for any "Check Engine" lights or warning messages, too.

Note that a humming sound or vibration, particularly from the rear of the vehicle at low to moderate speeds, could be a symptom of a problem with the All Wheel Drive (AWD) system, if so equipped. Note any harsh shifting or slipping from models equipped with the automatic transmission, too.

Some owners report misfiring, lumpy acceleration and hesitation in some situations, which may be caused by using non Volvo-recommended replacement spark plugs or fueling with 'regular' grade gasoline instead of premium.

Finally, most shoppers should avoid any used model with extensive modifications, especially to the engine or turbocharger system.

HANDOUT

Engine

Look for five-cylinder engines in either naturally-aspirated or turbocharged variants, producing as much as 227 horsepower. Automatic or manual transmissions and All Wheel Drive were available depending on the model selected.

What owners like

Refinement, engine performance from the turbocharged mill, handling, interior styling and a feeling of safety and confidence were some of the most highly-rated aspects of the V50.

What owners dislike

Limited at-hand storage, fuel mileage and blind spots are among the most common owner-stated gripes. Some owners wish for a less-stiff ride, too.

Verdict

For peace of mind, have your potential V50 checked out by a Volvo mechanic ahead of your purchase. No hugely troublesome issues seem apparent in this generation, and a stock, non-turbocharged model will be the least costly to run.

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You can be as adventurous as you please now, knowing that nothing bad will come of it. Make use of the Sun's final few days in sympathetic Sagittarius to have fun. Forget about yesterday, it's today that matters.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Money may be a little tight at the moment but that is no reason to deny yourself the good things in life. On the contrary, you will feel better about yourself if you splash out a bit — but not too much.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Thought may be your natural medium but with love planet Venus moving through the relationship area of your chart you want to express yourself not only mentally but romantically too. Give the object of your affection your full attention.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
If you need help, you must ask for it. No one will think any the less of you if you request assistance. On the contrary, they will admire your maturity. Neither success nor self-worth have anything to do with separation.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The more you have been working on serious things, the more you owe it to yourself to have some fun. Social activities, as well as an affair of the heart, will bring you a great deal of pleasure over the next 24 hours.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Today's rather unusual events will convince you that important objectives can only be reached if you are prepared to meet other people halfway. That applies not only to your allies but to your rivals too.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Most of the time your head rules your heart, but today the opposite will be true. You will allow your feelings to dictate what you say and do. Nothing bad will come of it. In fact, you will thoroughly enjoy yourself.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
Calm down and stop taking what other people say so seriously. Yes, of course, some individuals can be a complete pain but if you let them upset you it means they have won. It's life — learn to laugh at it.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Take your pleasures where you find them and don't give a thought to what is going on around you. Is that irresponsible? Some people may think so but you have done your bit for world peace — now you want a piece of the action.

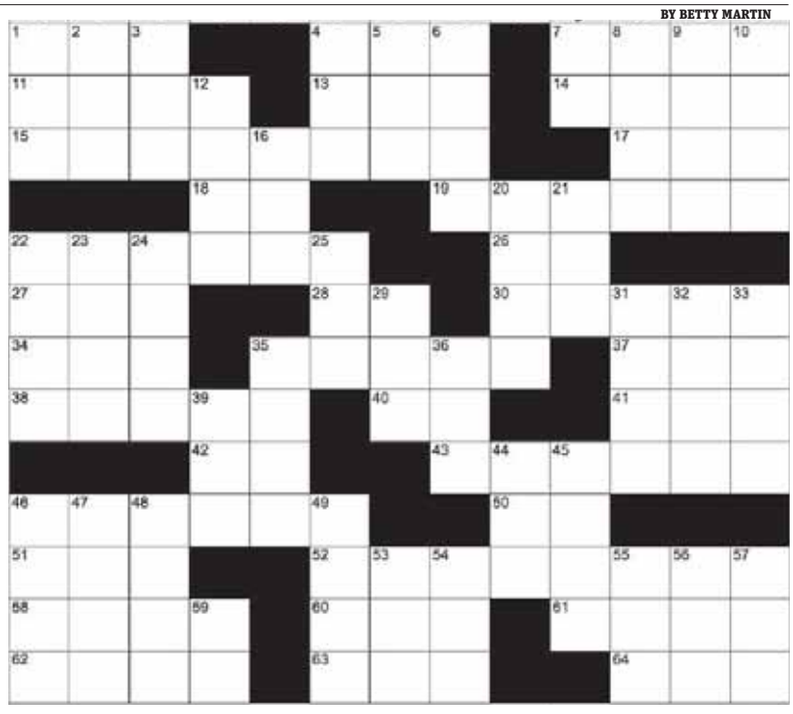
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Most of the time you think and behave rationally but the planets warn that your feelings could get the better of you today. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that so long as they are positive and loving feelings.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Stick to what you do best and don't let others involve you in things you have next to no interest in. There is only so much that any one person can do and you'll do your bit better if it inspires you.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You will find yourself up against someone who speaks and acts a bit too aggressively today but you must not react in kind. Smile, talk softly and reasonably and let them see you are beyond their reach. You win. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

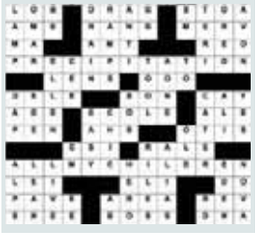
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Package request (abbr.)
4. Breakfast choice
7. Headliner
11. Extremely dry
13. Seminary subj.
14. Skin opening
15. Renounce
17. "Far out!"
18. Trucker's radio, for short
19. Occasions
22. Rate
26. Little Rock st.
27. Victory sign
28. Exclamation of surprise
30. At no time
34. Writer Levin
35. Whacks, as a housefly
37. Silkworm
38. Perry Mason's secretary
40. Musical note
41. Toss out
42. Knight of Grey's Anatomy
43. Busy – - — (3 words)
46. Archie Bunker's offspring
50. – the World Turns
51. Cut back
52. Careless
58. General vicinity
60. Battery sz.
61. Church section
62. Car mishap
63. Skillet
64. Pouch

Down
1. Canadian Auto Association
2. Sphere
3. "I Know What You — Last Summer"
4. Long, long time
5. — Smart
6. Jane Lynch series
7. She played Emily Hartley on The Bob Newhart Show (init.)
8. Severed
9. I smell - — (2 words)
10. Lipstick colours
12. Recipe direction
16. Survivor network
20. Moving vehicles
21. Sooner than, poetically
22. Eager
23. Dried
24. Circus barker
25. Farm mother
29. Sandwich filler
31. Part of speech
32. A great lake
33. Take the subway
35. Indian dress
36. — Maria (coffee liqueur)
39. Common paper sz.
44. Tree fluid
45. Business abbr.
46. Pleased
47. Knowledge
48. — Mike with Mike Bullard
49. Memo abbr.
53. Half a Teletubbie
54. McShane or Ziering
55. The Hour — 22 Minutes
56. Eggs
57. Winter mo.
59. One Day – a Time

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

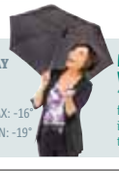
		9	3					
3		4						
	7			8			5	4
5					9	8	4	
		1		2		6		
	2	6	4					9
7	9			3			8	
						7		5
					1	2		

Yesterday's Sudoku

7	1	8	3	6	2	9	5	4
9	4	2	7	5	8	6	1	3
6	3	5	4	1	9	8	7	2
1	8	9	2	7	4	3	6	5
3	7	4	5	8	6	1	2	9
2	5	6	9	3	1	4	8	7
5	6	7	8	4	3	2	9	1
4	2	1	6	9	5	7	3	8
8	9	3	1	2	7	5	4	6

Weather

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
MAX: -11° MIN: -11°	MAX: -16° MIN: -17°	MAX: -16° MIN: -19°



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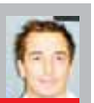
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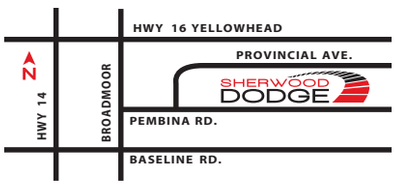

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- South Park Centre
- Southgate Mall – Kiosk
- St Albert Trail at 137 Ave
- West Edmonton Mall
- West Edmonton Mall – Kiosk
- Westmount Centre

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- Peter Pond Shopping Centre

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- Lethbridge SmartCentres
- Park Place

LLOYDMINSTER
- Lloyd Mall

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- Carry Drive Plaza
- Medicine Hat Mall

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